

Relationship between Economic Independence, Social Support and Quality of Life among Elderly People

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Aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship of economic independence, social support and quality of life among elderly people. The sample of 160 elderly people of age range 60 to 75 with education level from intermediate to masters was taken for the current study. Demographic Sheet was used to record the person characteristics of participants. Economic independence was also recorded as demographic by asking about personal source of income of an individual. Social support was measured by using Multidimensional scale of perceived social support. Quality of life Scale (Flanagan, 1982) was used to measure the quality of life of elderly people. It was hypothesized that social support is positively correlated with quality of life. It was also hypothesized that elderly people who have more income and economically independent will score high on social support and quality of life scale. Results strengthens the hypotheses of the study. Furthermore results of the current study suggested that elderly people who are living in joint family system are receiving more social support and have good quality of life.

Keywords: economic independence; social support; quality of life

The population of aged 60 years or older comprises 10 percent of the world's 6 billion inhabitants in the year 2000. This proportion is projected to increase about 22 percent of the world population by 2050, and a large part of this increase would be due to the rapid increment of the elderly population in developing countries. Pakistan is one of those developing countries that are witnessing the rapid aging of its population. The evidence shows a consistent decline in mortality in Pakistan with a resultant rise in life expectancy and a reduction in total fertility rate in recent years (Ali & Hussain, 2001; Hakim, John, & Bhatti, 1998).

Although aging is a natural life course process which is an outcome of the demographic transition but experience of aging changes with the change of societal norms and conditions (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000; Phillipson, 1998; Vincent, 2003). The problems of elderly population become manifold when elderly people are not accompanied by socio-economic development. As majority of the workforce in Pakistan is involved in the informal economy so

most of the older population is without a cover of pension or any type of social security scheme (Gordon & Townsend, 2000; Ogg, 2005). That means a large segment of the elderly population, because of their relatively disadvantaged socio-economic position, continue to live on low level of support than paid workers or those availing pension and other retirement benefits. These situations are increasing the dependency ratio of old age people (Afzal, 1999; Nasir & Ali, 2000).

In a study based on African data, Ramashala (2001) found that the poverty is 3 times more among elderly population than the younger population. In the intra-household distribution of resources, the elderly who are not as productive as the younger ones also do not get their due share. The recent estimates show that 33 percent of the Pakistan's population is living below or on poverty line (Qureshi & Arif, 2001). The increase in the levels of poverty undoubtedly affects more the lives of the elderly people. It is evident that income is a fundamental contributor to well being and quality of life and low income results in loss of esteem. Researchers explored