

## Original Research Article

# A descriptive study on correlates of stress and coping in relation to demographic variables in retirees of Kashmir valley

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** As age develops in employees, they have to get retirement from job permanently or they have to reach their retirement period. Studies on adjustment at retirement report that one-thirds of adults report significant difficulty during this process. This study was carried out to correlate stress and coping among old age retirees in relation to sociodemographic variables.

**Methods:** A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 retirees of district Srinagar between June 2015 and June 2016, using a semi-structured questionnaire. Levels of Stress among elderly retirees and their coping were assessed. Correlates of stress and coping were assessed with respect to different sociodemographic variables.

**Results:** Nearly 40% of cases had moderate level, 03% had severe level, 04% had extremely severe level, and around 35% had no stress. Majority of retired employees 85% either used average level, or used good level of coping with a minority 10% using low level of coping. There was a significant positive correlation between the stress and gender, stress and education and stress and years of experience. However there was statistically no significance between coping and demographic variables.

**Conclusions:** There is a need for organized family and social support to improve the physical and psychological health of elderly.

**Keywords:** Aging, Coping, Demographic variables and correlation, Retirees, Stress

## INTRODUCTION

“Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is youth of old age.”- a French phrase meaning that natural process of waxing and waning of the body ageing which start at very young age but is visible only in old age.<sup>1</sup> The world is ageing. By 2050, the population of people aged 60 and over is expected to reach 2 billion or 21% of the total global population. Today over 60% of the world’s older persons 60 and over live in the developing world. This figure is expected to rise to 85% by 2050.<sup>2</sup> India’s current older population of 60 million is projected to exceed 227 million in 2050, an increase of nearly 280% from today.<sup>3</sup>

As age develops in employees, they have to get retirement from job permanently or they have to reach their retirement period. Studies on adjustment at retirement report that one-thirds of adults report significant difficulty during this process. Now that retirees live longer, there is more interest in the quality of retirement life. In the past, most preparation for retirement morphed into financial planning. Interest shown in psychological concerns was secondary. Interest in the psychological aspects of retirement has increased with the awareness that financial security in retirement is but one important element. Retirees are likely to have some psychosocial issues with varying degrees of impact.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to understand what is happening on a physiological level when you are feeling stressed. When you are feeling stressed your brain perceives a threat and the fight or flight response is triggered. In a potentially threatening situation this response is invaluable and may save your life or the life of another. However, living in this state of heightened arousal (which short or long-term stressful events can generate) is not good for you and your body may begin to signal this to you in a variety of ways.<sup>5</sup>

A man, no matter how strong and severe he might have been in his prime years, becomes a helpless and dependent as an infant in times of stress. A very few seem to have time for the retired old and infirmed citizens. Unfortunately, even those of us who are on the plateau years (which immediately proceed the downhill years) try to wish retirement, as though it is a hidden stress, which will not strike us.<sup>6</sup>

The current population in India in 2015 is 1.29 billion, out of which 666 million are males and 623 million are females and according to NSSO (2007-2008) about 7.5% of total population lie in age distribution of 60 years or above, out of which 7.3% are males and 7.7 % are females.<sup>7</sup> As per details from census 2011, Jammu and Kashmir has population of 1.25 crores, an increase in figure of 1.1 crore in 2001 census. Out of 1.25 crores, 6640662 are males and 5900640 are females. The population of Jammu and Kashmir forms 1.04 percent of India in 2011 and according to population census 2001, 6.7% is elderly in total population of state.<sup>8</sup>

One more particular study in India has investigated the effect of socio-economic status and sex on emotional maturity, lifestyles, death anxiety, and locus of control and religiosity of the elderly (60+). The study concludes that socioeconomic status is a significant factor influencing lifestyles and religiosity among the elderly in India; sex significantly affects overall emotional maturity, emotional instability, emotional regression, personality disintegration and lack of independence; the normal coping, exploitative, domineering authoritarian and one-upmanship styles of life; religiosity and locus of control; and the interaction effect is significant only for emotional regression, personality disintegration, lack of independence and the individualistic, pampered, spoiled and domineering-authoritarian lifestyles.<sup>9</sup>

The attitude of family members towards the retired person changes and his attitude towards his family members also changes. Attitudes towards old age, degradation of status in the community, problems of isolation, loneliness and the generation gap are the prominent thrust areas resulting in socio-psychological frustration among the elderly.<sup>10</sup>

Keeping the above facts in view, the investigator felt it is necessary to assess the level of stress and coping among retired employees so that the knowledge obtained would

be useful in formulation of recommendations to promote health of elderly and prevent the mental health issues in retirees at its initial stages. All these stresses can be modified in a positive way by the use of appropriate coping strategies and stress management skills.

## METHODS

The present study was carried out at Mader-E-Meharban Institute of Nursing Sciences and Research SKIMS Soura from June 2015 to June 2016 in selected areas of Hazratbal Constituency in District Srinagar, Kashmir. It was an observational open label descriptive study. This research was initiated following approval by institutional ethical committee and board of research studies of Sheri Kashmir institute of medical sciences Soura Srinagar.

The selected areas include Burzahama, Chatterhama, Tailbal, Mulfaq, Habak, Zakura, Batapora and Gassu. The selection of this area was done based on the geographical proximity, feasibility of the study and availability of respondents. In the present study, target population comprises of the retired employees above the age of 60 years. The accessible population included retired employees in Hazratbal constituency of District Srinagar.

By using Snow-ball sampling technique a total of 100 retired employees were taken after taking proper permission from block medical officer of Hazratbal constituency and Phak Citizens Welfare Forum. Written informed consent was taken from each person in locally understandable language and was assured of the confidentiality of their identity.

All the cases were interviewed for socio demographic variables like Gender, Educational qualification, family type, monthly income and years of experience. DASS-21 self report questionnaires and Brief COPE Scale was the tool used for assessing stress and coping in retirees.

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21) is a short form of DASS which is a self-report 4-point Likert scale and composed of three subscales: Depression (DASS-D), Anxiety (DASS-A), and Stress (DASS-S). The alpha reliability coefficients for the DASS-21 subscales have been examined in clinical and nonclinical samples and reported as .94 for DASS-D, .87 for DASS-A, and .91 for DASS-S.<sup>11</sup>

The Brief COPE is a 28-item measure of situational and dispositional coping styles. Carver published the Brief COPE, a shortened version of the COPE designed for use when participant response burden is a considering factor.<sup>12</sup>

## Statistical analysis

Data was organized in Microsoft Excel sheet and was analyzed using SPSS version 20.0 and SYSTAT-13.

Frequency and percentage distribution of data was done for analysis of demographic variables. Mean, mean percentage and standard deviation of data was calculated for analysis of stress and coping. Chi-square test was used to determine the association between the level of stress and coping among retired employees with selected demographic variables (gender, educational qualification, type of family, monthly income, and years of experience). A p-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 represents the distribution of study subjects according to their socio-demographic variables. The data obtained are described in terms of gender, educational status, type of family, monthly income and years of experience as mentioned.

Table 2 represents an association of level of stress with selected demographic variables gender, educational

qualification, type of family, monthly income, and years of experience.

**Table 1: distribution of study subjects according to their socio-demographic variables.**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Cases	Percentage
Male/Female	74/26	74%/26%
Middle pass/10+2/ Graduate or above	20/39/41	20%/39%/41%
Nuclear/Joint/Extended	49/49/2	49%/49%/2%
More than 15000/Less than 15000	50/50	50%/50%
More than 30 years /Less than 30 years	60/40	60%/40%

Table 3 represents association of level of coping with selected demographic variables (gender, educational qualification, type of family, monthly income and years of experience).

**Table 2: An association of level of various parameters.**

Chi Square Test		Levels of Stress (N=100)					Association with stress scores	
Variables	Sub-items	Extremely severe	Severe	Moderate	Mild	Normal	Chi Test	P Value
Gender	Male	4	2	28	9	31	11.051	0.026*
	Female	0	1	12	9	4		
Education	Middle pass	2	0	13	1	4	24.352	0.002*
	Higher secondary	2	1	14	13	9		
	Graduate and above	0	2	13	4	22		
Type of family	Nuclear	0	2	22	7	18	9.791	0.280
	Joint	4	1	18	11	15		
	Extended	0	0	0	0	2		
Monthly income	>15000	0	2	16	11	21	8.215	0.084
	<15000	4	1	24	7	14		
Years of experience	>30years	2	0	20	10	28	12.339	0.015*
	<30years	2	3	20	8	7		

**Table 3: An association of level of coping with selected demographic variables.**

Chi square test		Levels (n=100) %			Association with coping scores	
Variables	Sub-items	Good	Average	Low	Chi test	p value
Gender	Male	5	62	7	1.888	0.389
	Female	0	23	3		
Education	Middle pass	2	18	0	8.368	0.079
	Higher secondary	0	36	3		
	Graduate and above	3	31	7		
Type of family	Nuclear	3	38	8	4.822	0.306
	Joint	2	45	2		
	Extended	0	2	0		
Monthly income	>15000	1	42	7	3.407	0.182
	<15000	4	43	3		
Years of experience	>30years	5	50	5	3.794	0.150
	<30years	0	35	5		

## DISCUSSION

Aging is the problem with almost every family involving strains and stresses in taking care of them. It has become an important socio psychological problem in the community, gradually number of negligence also increased mainly diseased, disabled, and psycho physiologically deteriorated old age people.<sup>13</sup> Ageing is coming up as one of the biggest challenge the world over. At any age, stress is a part of life, young and old alike have face difficult situations and overcome obstacles, with increasing age, people are more susceptible to physical, psychological, social and emotional problems.<sup>14</sup>

Our study results reveal that two third of the respondents were males, nearly half of them belong either to Graduate or above qualification and having higher secondary school qualification, equal proportion of them were from nuclear and joint family, financial status of respondents shows that equal proportion of them had either above or below 15,000 monthly incomes. Furthermore, the maximum of respondents had greater than 30 years of experience and minority had less than 30 years of experience.

The present study indicates that maximum number of respondents had either moderate level or mild level of stress while as one third of respondents was without any stress. The present study indicates that while comparing the stress scores between males and females, higher proportion of females had high stress scores and the difference was statistically significant. our study results are consistent with Reynolds et al were Findings of study the reveal that women experienced higher rates of mood, stress and anxiety disorder and men experienced higher rates of substance use and personality disorders which defines that gender is associated with stress.<sup>15</sup>

Similar results were seen by Kamble et al, Ghafari et al, Oniye et al, Wang et al. and Castillo et al were the Findings revealed that Female gender, illiteracy (educational qualification) were the factors associated with poor mental health status of elderly persons.<sup>16-20</sup>

A higher proportion of the following subgroups had higher stress scores-those with lower educational levels and more than 30 years of experience and the difference were statistically significant. Abrahams and Patterson in their studies have reported that financial independency and higher socio-economic status played a protective role against psychological stress.<sup>21</sup> Wang et al, and Kamble et al, has also reported a significant association between educational levels of respondents and stress.<sup>19,16</sup>

The present result was in relation to the findings of a Study conducted by Oniye et al, were findings revealed that there are both sex and educational background differences in the perception of retirement stress being experienced by the retirees, thus relating the stress with

gender and educational qualification of retired employees.<sup>18</sup>

The data in the present study indicates that no significant association was found between the socio -demographic variable Gender, educational qualification, type of family, monthly income and years of experience of retired employees with their coping scores. Findings of a study by Rubio et al contradicted our study results and revealed that Age, gender or type of stressful situation impact on the coping strategies used by older people. Older men and women were found to use different strategies depending upon the situation they are facing and upon their age group, thus contradicting present study findings.<sup>22</sup>

Our study has few limitations. This study was conducted in a single district of Kashmir, J and K so the results cannot be generalized. Responses given by the participants were self-reported, hence the severity of the co-morbid conditions could not be assessed.

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