

An investigation of elderly problems, a sociological explanation (Case study: Saghez city)

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Abstract

The present research by using the theoretical approach and reference to research findings done in the area of subjects and surveys seeks to describe the aging years, the elderly in different cultures and their problems in the city and to present necessary guidelines for solving elderly problems. On the basis of three theoretical approaches of biology, psychology and sociology such variables as socioeconomic station, marriage status, sustenance, family and relative relations, social relations, physical weaknesses, place of birth, age, positive attitude to the elderly and well-being amenities as independent variables were analyzed at two micro and macro levels on dependent variables of life span, activities , conservatism, isolation, review of past life, social participation, spending the leisure time and effective social relations.

Based on data analysis, variables of family and relative relations, well-being amenities, place of birth and marriage status and spending leisure time are significantly related with life span while family and relative relations and physical weaknesses are significantly related with isolation and social relations and socioeconomic station are related with activities, socioeconomic station and age. Meantime, attitudes towards the phenomenon of ageing are related with social participation and socioeconomic station is related with activities and physical weaknesses are related with isolation and conservatism. On the other hand, socioeconomic relations are related with social relations and spending leisure times are related with a review of past life. Nevertheless, the variables of socioeconomic station and sustenance are not related with age.

Keywords: Elderly, Social participation, Activities, Saghez

Introduction

Humans in the life time will face a stage of aging that is a result of natural growth. This phenomenon is intermingled with the human destiny and is considered to be an inevitable necessity. This phenomenon has existed in all historic eras, while contrary to the past years, some advanced medical progress, state of nutrition and application of treatment therapies have resulted in increased number of the elderly in different societies. People not only have long lives than past but they are also enjoying better life conditions. To Survey, a European sociologist, one of the current time phenomena which is found to be least confronted with, whose advance is assuredly on the rise and is easily predictable and may have in itself the highest consequences is the phenomenon of aging. (Simon Deboir,2009). A rise of the

elderly population in the contemporary world in recent decades tells the fact itself. This trend will in the future be aggravated due to advancements of sciences and technology. It is estimated that in recent years around 2.5% is added to the number of the people over 65 years and more annually. (Manoochehr, Mohseni,2008).In a near future, the Iranian society will be faced with a wider group of the elderly and any planning in this area is a necessity.

In accordance with biological, psychological and sociological perspectives, outlining a theoretical framework and research hypotheses have three duties. The research has a fundamental objective and seeks to identify elderly problems because the elderly should not be marginalized from the society due to aging rather they should be attended to as a source of human force and valuable treasures and experiences. Based on a philosophical objective the research attempts to deal with the elderly population by making changes to the peoples' attitudes of the society because, the elderly people don't need to be pitied rather, their remaining capacities should be maximally used for national development and get them actively involved in the social affairs along with other members of the society. The third objective is of an application because a changing environment will require necessary planning so that the abilities of the elderly population will be upheld by the government towards a healthy and fruitful life. Thus, the present paper in a sociological explanation addresses the problems of the elderly and on this basis it involves reasoning and explanations.

Theoretical framework of the research

Understanding social phenomena in accordance with breadth and complexities of the human world and massive information requires a special theoretical framework so that realities are addressed from a special angle. In the present research in line with understanding the phenomenon of the aging population a theoretical framework has been designed by way of using the resources.

A. **Biological perspective:** This perspective addresses characteristics and incapacities of the elderly people and internal and external factors ,e.g. inheritance and diseases effective in aging; also, changes to the aspects are of two kinds a. primary aging by which it is meant inheritance and biological factors which are affected by internal diseases and shocks that affect the aging process, b. Secondary aging where mental factors affect the elderly people and they are called external factors (Gholamreza Mirsepasi,1998).

On the other hand, physical aspects affecting the elderly are effective on the process of aging. These changes include reduced skin elasticity, changes in some of the five senses like hearing and eyesight, osteoporosis, joint variations, muscular weakness, and cardiac out put is reduced among the elderly population and their vital lungs will decline while kidney filtration will start becoming deficient.(Mohaddesi , Javad,2000).

B. **Psychological theories:** Here, in this perspective, the focus is to examine this phenomenon by using the mental and personality characteristics of people. Increased age will disrupt the bodily functions and this transformation will result in isolation and separation among the elderly people because, due to physical weakness they feel insecure than others and prefer avoidance than participation in association. Also, mental changes like diminished

memory, intelligence, weak receptors, will add to the inclination of the elderly to maintain the memories of the past. This will make a defense system that would draw the elderly from a critical period of aging to a desirable word of past. In addition to this, tendency to conservatism will increase among them.

Based on a psychological perspective, man deals with the aging phenomenon differently so that some people deal with it constructively and accept it with comfort and relaxation. Yet, some others look at it from a dependent angle and are reactive to it and they actually avoid aging realities and try to deal with it unrealistically. They, in fact, attempt to keep away from that. Some other people deal inflexibly and stubbornly with aging and resulting problems. Other people could aggressively expose violence to their families and friends. Yet, another group of people take on some critical aspects and feel hatred to them selves. (Maltz, Maxwell, 2006). In this area, one of the main psychological theories is the Erikson's social biological-mental growth. He maintains the elderly people due to efficiency, gradual weakness of the body, losing the beloved ones, are faced with a stage of reviewing the life so that they continuously attempt to evaluate their own past while keeping themselves busy with that (Gholam reza Tabrizi, 2001).

C. **Sociological perspective:** This perspective by using the impacts of social and cultural factors seeks to analyze the phenomenon of aging. This perspective is divided into different theories where the most important of which is the theory of non-participation or lack of obligation, theory of activity, theory of exchange and of social environment. According to the theory of non-participation developed by Elian Cumming and William Henry in 1961, the elderly people amid getting ready for death will keep aside most of their social roles like being a spouse, recreational activities and working and remains in a state of lack of obligation (Ghaemi Ali, 1986). In the theory of activities, because of undefined roles remaining, man will be faced with disorders and irregularities and gradually loses his goals while he does not become adaptive and actually becomes alien to himself. Based on the theory of exchange developed by Jame Dowder in 1980 once the reciprocal social relations are complete when all the participants feel interested, satisfied and pleased with it. (Ataollah Masnavi, 1999). In the theory of social environment by Koberioum, too, social circumstances are effective in the life of the elderly and he states that three main factors of health, financial situation, social needs and some other factors like spouse, family or social relations contribute to the activities of the elderly people (Robert Dall Marshall, et al, 1987).

By reviewing the theories held by theorists and the fact this paper is done in two micro and macro levels, hence, we are going to investigate the phenomenon of aging from three biological, psychological and sociological perspectives where the biological perspective deals with characteristics and incapacities of the elderly people, the psychological perspective deals with mental and personality conditions and sociological factors investigate the social and cultural factors on analyzing the aging process. The psychological perspective states that because of mental and personality circumstances in the reciprocal actions, the role of increased age due to disorders will involve such consequences as isolation, feeling insecure to others, tendency to maintaining past memories and tendency to conservatism. The sociological perspective deals with the impacts of social and cultural factors such as keeping

aside the social roles, losing the goals, lack of adaptation with the strangers and absence of reciprocal social relations and the impacts of three main factors of health, financial situation, social needs and some other factors like spouse, family or social relations of the aged people.

In the present research based on the theoretical framework and research literature the elderly people amid getting ready for death will keep aside most of his social roles like being a spouse, recreational activities and working and remains in a state of lack of obligation. Social circumstances are effective in the life of the elderly and the paper examines the three main factors of health, financial situation, and social needs and some other factors like spouse, family or social relations on the lives of the elderly people.

In the current paper based on theoretical framework and research literature such variables as socioeconomic station, marriage status, sustenance, family and relative relations, social relations, physical weaknesses, place of birth, age, positive attitude to the elderly and well-being amenities as independent variables were analyzed at two micro and macro levels on dependent variables of life span, activities, conservatism, isolation, review of past life, social participation, spending the leisure time and effective social relations.

Research literature

The research by Pierre Edder in 1972 using the statistics of 1955 and 1966 warns of a number of the elderly in Iran and the research by applying the viewpoints of three classes of employees, laborers and students seeks to prove the hypothesis suggesting the impacts of the social station transformation of the elderly due to social and economic evolutions. As a result, as traditional and religious establishments became prevalent the severity of the elderly's problems becomes less (Samaram, Ezzatollah, 1992). Based on a research by Mostofizade Mehr in 1975 the major factors for the appearance of the aging phenomenon are the uncontrolled migration from villages to cities and from small cities to the suburbs of Tehran and subsequent collateral damage. (Francis Castello .Vincent, 1997)

By studying the spouseless elderly the 1996 Hoghoghozari concludes the people left behind will fall ill sooner by getting afflicted with physical and mental diseases and more they will be suffering from such problems as irritation and isolation (Hoghoghozai, Fateme, 1998). In 1990, Bazargan by investigating twelve elderly houses (retiree houses) in Tehran concluded that the health and hygienic amenities of the elderly were highest in terms of quality compared to other welfare-health amenities while they had weaker recreational and entertaining amenities (Bazargan Rahim, 1992). According to the medical researches of the Yale University, the elderly who live with spouses and their family members and have confidence in their assistances will live on average seven more years (Simon Deboir, 1986). The study by Kiroot in 1961 the elderly afflicted with physical disorders, personality and loss of kinsmen were found to be more socially isolated. (Nosratollah Poor Afkari, 1990).

The Post research in 1974 showed that one third of the elderly suffer from nihilism delusions, and beliefs in body free from souls, loss of physical actions and accusing illusions. (Ibid). In a research Levine concluded that the more a person becomes aged the less he participates in an urban life (Parviz Piran and Abdolali Rezaee, 1988). Liza Balkman demonstrated that as

much as 45% of the people who were enjoying from psychic and spiritual assistances lived for another year after a very severe heart seizure (Esmaeel Shamsavand, 1994). Based on the Baltz' researches the elderly are inclined to live in an environment far from expectations and free from arousal and movement states (Kamran Rouh Baltz, 1998). A review of the literature in Iran and across the world indicates that the aging population is of high importance because, aging is the descending trend of the man's life and it is necessary to have an accurate futuristic planning so that the problem of the aged people are solved and the government won't bear the losses.

Methodology

The method used in the paper is of a survey type and in accordance with the theoretical framework the standard questionnaire technic was used for collecting the final information of the research. The information was collected by using the questionnaires completed by the elderly themselves. After a review of literature and sources research hypotheses were developed and questions of the questionnaires were formulated based on hypotheses. In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the research, a preliminary test before the research was conducted on a smaller but similar sample and then, the questions of inappropriate items were eliminated. The correlation coefficient method of the internal validity of the items was used for the internal validity of the items. Then, the items of low coefficient were eliminated and a statistic named alpha was applied for measuring the accuracy of the indices in measuring the data. Items of low alpha were removed. For processing the data, the χ^2 test was applied for the relation of the variables at the distance level while the dyx Sommers' day test as used for the relation of variables at the other level.

The statistical population included the elderly living in Saghez. In the research two sampling methods of accidental and quota were applied. In the first stage based on a consensus of 1997 the elderly were sexually divided who numbered 5428 people. Men accounted for 2912 while women were 2516 people. Then, through the sampling Cochran formula the sample size was determined. On this basis, $N=5428$, $t=1.96$, $p=0.54$, $q=0$ and $t=5\%$. The sample size is equal to 356 including 191 men and 165 women. The research and appraisal unit consisted of over 65 years aged people.

Research findings

In the research 356 people of the city residents were placed under study. Based on statistical data men accounted for 54% of the sample size while women constituted 46% of the sample. The age range is over 65 years and two age groups of 65-69 with 36.5% and of 70-74 with 29.5% were assigned the highest frequency in the sample universe. Uncontrolled migration from villages to cities for meeting their needs has led to the fact that the sample size is consisted of 69.7% of villagers and of 30.3% city residents. High percentage of married people, i.e. 55.1% and rare cases of divorce in the sample universe are suggestive of consolidated marital bonds among the sample size. Also, high percentage of people with dead spouses, 30% of the total sample universe and 12.6% of people with remarriage tell of the fact that there is little chance for remarriage of the elderly. Most elderly of the sample size,

i.e. 77% are unlearned while the rest just have the literacy of writing and reading, i.e. under diploma degrees.

Most aged women are without jobs, hence, there are a high percentage of people under custody so that 33.7% of the sample people are without earnings and are supported by others. Most people too have earnings less than 150 Dollars in month. Low education, sufficient earning and inappropriate profession in the sample universe are problems of more than half of the population where they account for 62.6% of the population and have weak social-economic station. To the contrary, a low percentage or just around %9 possess higher socioeconomic positions. Low earnings and difficulties in providing services and life facilities of the population have resulted in a low percentage of 41.3 % of the people to enjoy welfare amenities while only %10.4 possess high welfare amenities.

Old ages, absence of appropriate spaces for spending leisure times and shortage of earnings in the sample size have all caused 31.6% of the people to sleep their idle times at home and do nothing. Because in the sample size fewer people reach higher ages, hence, physical weaknesses are not so considerable among them. Meantime, as much as 21.6% has few physical weaknesses, 54.5 % has average physical weakness while 23.9% is physically weak. Major diseases and malaises of the elderly include leg ache, optical malaise, blood pressure, breath chokings, asthma, hearing disabilities, and stomach and heart complaints. The effects of high age are quite clear in the social activities of the elderly because, 94.1% of the people are with low activities while 5.9% have average activities.

Transformation of families from extended o nuclear families and acquiring varied and new roles have got the relative system be faced with difficulties so that 26.1% of the sample size have low relative relations, 50% have average relations while 23.9 %have higher relative relations.

While assessing the financial and spiritual support thrown on the back of the aged people especially those of the sample size we found out that most people in the sample size, i.e. 73.1% enjoyed low support suggesting a bitter reality in the current society. A decline in physics, growing trend of death of the beloved ones results in the obsession of the people towards their past lives. In this case, 43.5% of the people of the sample size review the past life greatly, 19.7% reviews it little while 36.8% does the same an average. The imagination of incompetency to deal with changes or coordinated with it due to weak physical abilities in the sample size resulted in 27.5% of the sample size to be highly conservative and 59% to be averagely conservatism . Physical, social and financial limitations have to some extent reduced their social participation for people so that 24.1% of the sample size has little social participation while 43.3% has high participation. Non-social participation of the sample size results in their isolation. Because, 74.3% of the sample size are highly isolated and 25.6% are isolated on average while 0.1% isolated little. More than half of the sample size , i.e. 57.9% enjoy low social relations and a slight percentage of them have greater social relations. A regretful image of the house of the retired (elderly) by the mass media and its heterogeneity with the culture of the social sample resulted in people to have a negative look at these places. Meantime 58. 4% of the people has a negative attitude while 7.3% has a positive

attitude towards the elderly. A taboo of traditional life like living with the family and respect for the elders in the society have resulted in 24.4% of people to have a positive attention to the elderly while 51.1% of the sample universe are negative to wards the phenomenon.

While expressing their own problems people of the sample size have referred to such categories as non -provision of the subsistence and inappropriate state of living, addiction and corruption in the society, disrespect by the members of the society and of the family to the elders, family problems, being ostracized by the children, difference of opinion by the other members of the family, decrepitude and incapacity and welfare amenities. The people of the sample size, also, to provide their living have considered as importance actions attention to treatment and health affairs, creation of welfare amenities, attention to the problems of the children, respect for the elders, consulting them and using their experiences in decision making. Statistical tests related with convergence of the data of the independent and dependent variables have all presented a comprehensive image of the factors affecting elderly at two micro and macro levels. This image is in concert with the theoretical framework and reaffirms the research hypothesis.

Table 1. Hypotesis

Hypotesis		X2	df	sig	dyx	v
Economic-social status	→ participation	11.1571	8	0.21296	-0.02765	0.12517
	→ Activity	8.3435	2	0.01542	0.6336	-
	→ relation Social	15.88710	4	0.00317	0.18310	-
Sex	Age	4.96784	4	0.29061	0.12813	0.11813
Marriage status	Age	34.7851	20	0.02983	0.5334	0.15629
Place of birth	Age	11.5925	4	0.04843	0.20386	0.18076
Support	Age	6.4494	8	0.39831	0.0495	0,09517
Amenities	Age	18.2866	8	0.03763	0.14603	0.16026
Economic-social status	Age	28.36130	4	0.0001	0.2479	-
Family- kinship relation	Age	21.9382	8	0,04209	0.06431	0.17553
Family- kinship relation	Isolation	10.3199	4	0.02222	-013126	-
Physical weakness	→ Conservatism	10.7933	4	0.0289	-0.13293	-
	→ Isolation	10.4164	4	0.0204	0.05661	-
	→ Review of the past	13.9023	4	0.02655	0.12356	-
Positive attitude to age	Socialrelaton	83.4697	4	0.0000	0.38234	-
Age	participation	16.1469	8	0.04818	0.09435	0.15059
	Leisure	94.3938	16	0.03803	-0.3058	-

Reference: research findings

There is a significant relation between the place of birth and age, i.e. the residence of the elderly affects the increased life. There is a significant relation between marriage status and length of life and this means that marriage status affects the age. There is no significant relation between socio-economic station and life span and this means that station does not affect age. However, there is a significant relation between the participation of the sample size and affected by their socio-economic station and their enhanced socio-economic of the social participation. There is a significant relation between the socio-economic station and social relations and this means the socio-economic station affects social relations. Higher station will contribute to greater social relations. There is a significant relation between age and spending leisure time, the fewer people age is, the more they can spend their leisure times. There is a significant relation between welfare amenities and life span and this means that the more people enjoy welfare amenities the more it is possible for them to live. There is a significant relation between family and relative relation and age, i.e. greater relative family relations are effective on life span. There is a no significant relation between mental and spiritual support and age. In other words, spiritual support thrown on the back of the elderly does not affect their life span. There is a significant relation between family relations and isolation. In other words, intimate and warm relations of the families will reduce the possibility of isolation and also, there is a significant relation between spending leisure time and age, i.e. spending leisure time affects the life span.

There is a significant relation between weak physical capacities and isolation, i.e. plenty of weak physics capacities does affect isolation. Also, there is a significant relation between physical weakness and conservatism and it means that the more people are physically weak the more they will be conservatism. There is a significant relation between positive attitudes to elderly and social participation and it means that as attitudes to elders grows positively participation will be high and in the end, there is a significant relation between age and social participation and age is possible affects the social participation of the elders.

Conclusion

Given the fact that results of the current research (Pirad, 1972; Mostofizade, 1976; Haghhoogodazi, 1997; Bazargan, 1995; Momeni, 1997; Researchers at the University of Bill; Kierout, 1981; Post, 1974, Levine, Blatza, 1998) are in line with most findings of the previous researches and support them, one can argue that the current research enjoys a strong theoretical backing and the results obtained can be generalized to the whole statistical population. A review of discussions and accomplishments of the current research highlights the necessity of a new look at the elderly situation and involves this approach that single dimension looking and dispersed actions within planning for removing problems pertaining to the elderly won't be fruitful; rather an exit from problems of the elderly will necessitate an adoption of an approach at the middle and macro level in the society.

Aging is part of life periods of every human and the end of the Second World War was a turning point in demographic developments and from then on the advanced medical

technology eliminated most problems in the area of human societies. Aging requires a source of knowledge, awareness and acquisition of experiences and intellectual and participatory skills in the society. In accordance with necessary preconditions for eliminating the problems of the elderly this phenomenon should not be taken as a force out of the personal control rather in parallel with social grounds and allocation of sources and divinities the elders' characteristics and needs should be taken into consideration. Although limitations and inappropriate conditions result in constraints for the people official can affect this process while establishing necessary situations for the elderly.

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