

## Psycho Social Challenges Faced By Elderly Individuals Of Gilgit Baltistan



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**Abstract:** Ageing is a natural and a simultaneous phenomena and all individuals are to observe this at the last stages of their lives. In today's modern world, The aging population is a growing concern , and Gilgit Baltistan, a remote region in Pakistan, is no exception. This qualitative study aimed to explore the social effects of age on elderly individuals in Gilgit Baltistan, examining the impact of age on their social relationships, community participation, and overall well-being. The methodology applied was exploratory, the method was in-depth interviews while using interview guide as a tool for qualitative data collection. Using a phenomenological approach, 30 elderly individuals (aged 60-80 years) from various districts in Gilgit Baltistan were recruited through purposive sampling technique. In-depth interviews were carried out to gather primary data on their experiences, thoughts , and feelings about aging. The results of the research study provides that age has a significant impact on the psychological and social lives of elderly individuals . The research outcomes have significant consequences for regulations and strategies in Gilgit Baltistan suggesting that addressing the social effects of aging requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique challenges faced by elderly individuals in this region.

**Keywords:** Psychological issues, social challenges, Ageing, Gender and old age, Health profile, remote area

### Introduction

Gilgit Baltistan, a mountainous region in the north Pakistan, bordered by various countries including Afghanistan to the west, China to the north, and Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir to the southeast. Gilgit, commonly known for its breathtaking landscapes, including towering peaks, glaciers, and deep valleys, making it a popular destination for adventure tourism. Despite the increasing importance of understanding the social effects of aging, there is insignificant research on the geriatric individuals of this region.

The population of Gilgit Baltistan is diverse, with people belonging to various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, including Balti, Shina,

and Burushaski. The region's cultural heritage is rich, with influences from Tibetan, Central Asian, and South Asian connections. The elderly population in Gilgit Baltistan, like in many other parts of the world, is tremendously increasing. These might be due to certain factors that might include extended lifespan and declining fertility rates. As the population ages, there is a need to analyze and address the psychosocial challenges faced by elderly individuals in the region.

Elderly individuals in Gilgit Baltistan may be subjected to different psychosocial challenges,

including social isolation<sup>1</sup>, limited access to healthcare services, financial insecurity, and age-related discrimination. Cultural norms and traditions may also influence the experiences of aging and shape the support networks available to elderly individuals. Understanding the unique context of Gilgit Baltistan and the specific challenges faced by its elderly population is essential for developing targeted interventions and policies for enhancing social inclusivity and quality of life for the adults in this area.

The process of aging is often viewed negatively, with older adults experiencing societal attitudes that diminish their value and contributions. Ageism, manifested through stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory actions, significantly affects older adults' psychological well-being. Negative stereotypes can lead to low self-esteem and health issues, while discrimination can increase stress and depression levels. However, there is a lack of empirical research exploring the psychological impact of ageism on older adults, highlighting the need for further investigation into this important issue.

Like many other regions across the globe, Gilgit Baltistan as well is experiencing population aging, with a growing proportion of elderly individuals. Understanding the psychosocial challenges faced by this demographic group is essential for addressing their unique needs and ensuring they receive adequate support and resources. Just like any region of the world possess it's own norms, set of beliefs, ideas and values, Gilgit Baltistan has its own cultural norms, values, and traditions, which might cause an impact on the experiences of aging and the psychosocial challenges encountered by elderly individuals. Cultural factors can impact how older adults perceive their roles within the community, seek help for mental health issues, and access support networks.

Due to a remote region with a hilly track, The region may face challenges related to limited healthcare infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social services and lack of

fund allocation. These limitations can foster psychosocial challenges among elderly individuals, especially during mental health care, social support, and financial assistance. Psychosocial well-being is closely linked to overall quality of life. Addressing psychosocial challenges among the elderly in Gilgit Baltistan can contribute to enhancing their quality of life and enabling them to age with dignity and respect. By having an insight into the psychosocial challenges, researchers, policymakers, and governing authorities can develop targeted interventions and policies to support the mental and emotional well-being of elderly individuals, promote social inclusion, and improve overall health outcomes. This research is essential for fostering a society that values and respects its older members and ensures they can lead fulfilling and meaningful lives as they age.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The elderly groups within a society, starts emerging with an increased rate of infertility and decreasing mortality Along with the prolonged lifespans. [\(Pakulski,2016\)](#). It has also been brought under significant consideration that the organizational structures and the social setup of it society is not liable to individuals of older ages. A slight change in the categories and arrangements could help elderly, adjusts in these environments. [\(Bloom. et.al.,2015\)](#) . The elderly groups in the society is lagging behind the innovative technological innovations. Technology gets enhanced and updated with every passing moment. For those individuals, who are living in their final years, using cutting edge technologies might seem complexity in their daily life activities . [\(Li.et.al,2021\)](#). In the contemporary era, the nuclear family systems rather than the extended ones has increased problems for elderly. This emergence of prevailing nuclear families the old rich family members are exposed to psychological, physical and economic sovereignty. [\(Amiri,2018\)](#)

Psychosocial well-being variables were more effective than health indicators in explaining the

disengagement from social relationships and community.

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<sup>1</sup> A state of being disconnected from others, leading to feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and

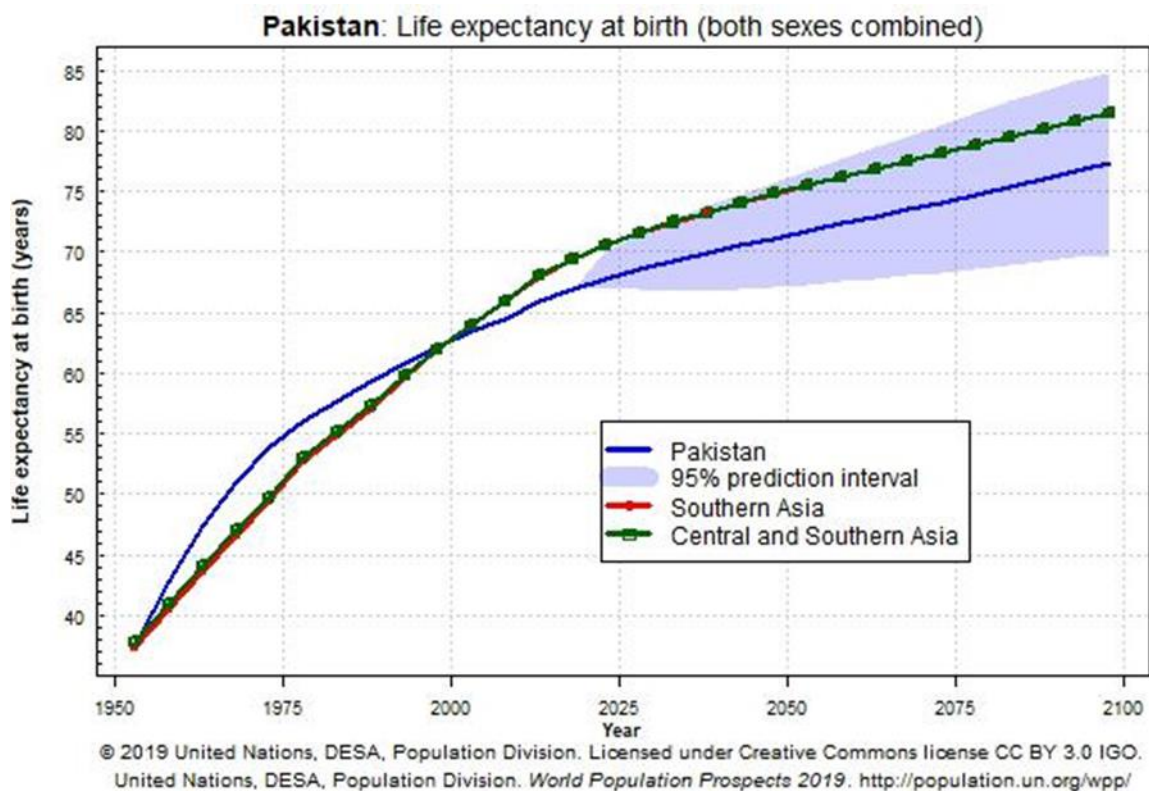
elderly's 'desire to live'. Research demonstrates a significant relationship between low well-being and high Depressive symptomatology (DS). Well-being is a key predictor of DS, which increases as DS reduces. (Haq,2012)

The challenges of aging include increased healthcare bills and obligations. These demand special attention because of their magnitude and rate of acceleration, which are greater than other welfare expenses, as well as their decreasing manageability. The quick acceleration is the outcome of rising expectations and demands, as well as the evolving nature of age-related chronic illnesses. (Pakulski,2016). Because of the present spread of the COVID virus and the immediate requirement for their isolation, the older persons residing in these institutions are lonely and have limited access to health services for fear of becoming infected.(Mobasseri,etc.al, 2020) Older individuals have the entitlement to social support based on their social and medical condition, as well as their economic resources (income, assets, etc.).(Ghenta,2022)

The increasing aging of populations throughout the world provides an unusual mix of

challenges: changing disease load, rising expenditure on health and long-term care, labor-force shortages, dissaving, and possible issues with old-age income security.(Bloom, et.al,2015) .According to the United Nations' most recent forecasts, the world's population might reach 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and 10.4 billion in 2100(United Nations) . As a result, if concrete efforts are not done now, emerging nations will have a difficult task in combating the problem of a big proportion of the population that is aged in the future years(Haq,2012) . Because health insurance is not widely used, the populace must pay for all medical treatments out of cash. (Jalal,2014)

Many studies indicate that social isolation and loneliness are prevalent among elderly populations worldwide. This is often exacerbated by factors such as living alone, loss of spouse or friends, and limited social interactions. In cultures where familial bonds are strong, such as in Gilgit Baltistan, changes in family structure or migration of younger generations may contribute to increased social isolation among the elderly.

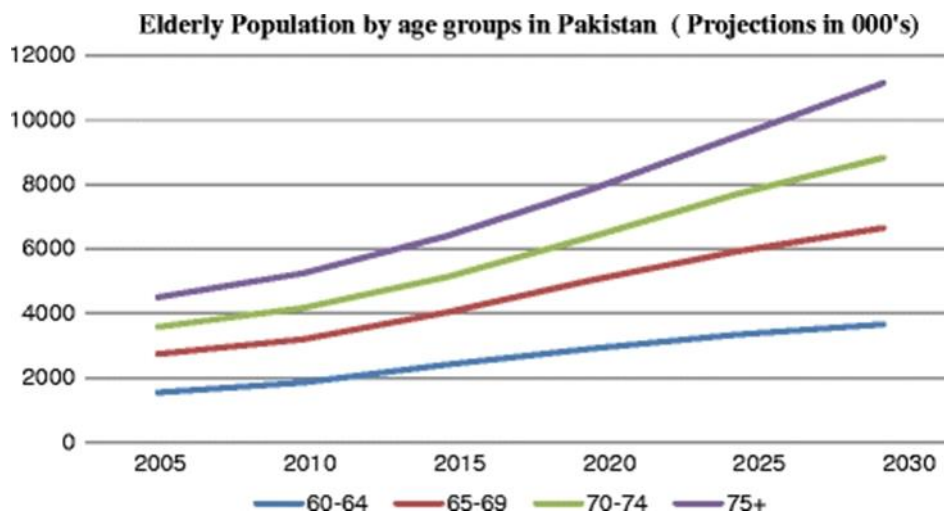


Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019, Online Edition. Rev. 1.

Depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders are significant psychosocial challenges faced by elderly individuals. Stereotypes regarding mental illnesses and unavailability of healthcare organizations and age-related changes in cognition and functioning can all contribute to the prevalence of mental health issues in older adults. Economic challenges, including poverty, inadequate pensions, and lack of financial resources, can impact the psychosocial well-being of elderly individuals. Financial insecurity may lead to stress, anxiety, and feelings of inadequacy, particularly in cultures where older adults are expected to be financially self-sufficient. Access to healthcare services and the quality of care received are important determinants of psychosocial well-being among the elderly. In regions with limited healthcare infrastructure, elderly individuals may face barriers to accessing medical treatment, preventive care, and mental health services, leading to poorer health outcomes and increased psychosocial distress. Cultural norms and values shape the experiences of aging and the psychosocial challenges faced by elderly individuals. In cultures where older adults are highly respected and valued, psychosocial support networks may be stronger, contributing to better mental and emotional well-being. However, cultural expectations regarding gender roles, caregiving responsibilities, and intergenerational relationships can also influence the psychosocial experiences of elderly individuals. Gilgit

Baltistan has its own distinct cultural norms, values, and traditions, which may shape the psychosocial experiences of elderly individuals in unique ways. However, there is a lack of research that explores how these cultural factors influence the psychosocial well-being of older adults in the region.

While healthcare access and quality are important determinants of psychosocial well-being among elderly populations, there is limited research on this topic in the context of Gilgit Baltistan. Understanding the availability of healthcare services, barriers to access, and the quality of care received by elderly individuals is essential for addressing their psychosocial needs effectively. Gilgit Baltistan is known for its strong sense of community and social cohesion. However, there is a dearth of research examining the role of community support networks in mitigating psychosocial challenges among elderly individuals. Exploring the extent and effectiveness of informal support systems, such as family networks and community organizations, can provide valuable insights into how to better support older adults in the region. Gender hold a crucial position in shaping the experiences of aging and the psychosocial challenges faced by elderly individuals. However, there is limited research on how gender dynamics intersect with other factors, such as socioeconomic status and cultural norms, to influence the psychosocial well-being of elderly individuals in Gilgit Baltistan.



## International Journal of Human and Society (IJHS)

Aging and elderly in Pakistan.

Source: Ageing International (2014). <https://images.app.goo.gl/TX9TizLgPnpc56Ky8>

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the primary data collection, 15 respondents aged between 60-80 years have been selected through purposive sampling technique and in depth interviews has been carried out. Collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to understand psycho-social challenges faced by elderly individuals in Gilgit. elderly individuals from different areas of Gilgit aged between 60-80 years have been selected through purposive sampling technique. Open ended, semi-structured interviews with a subset of survey participants. Both Paper-based or online survey tools like Google Forms and face to face interviews have been done. Digital voice recorders or smartphone apps for recording interviews have been used.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

For the primary data collection, 15 respondents aged between 60-80 years have been selected through purposive sampling technique and in depth interviews has been carried out. Their thoughts and experiences have been analyzed according to which Depression and anxiety are common psychological concerns. , with respondents experiencing feelings of sadness, social isolation , or depression . The respondents also reported feelings of loneliness, citing lack of social interaction, limited mobility, and decreased social connections. Mental health stigma is observed prevalent, with respondents feeling ashamed or embarrassed about seeking help for mental health issues. One of the major issues is faced during Access to healthcare , respondents seek difficulty accessing healthcare services due to lack of transportation, financial constraints, or lack of healthcare professionals. Moreover, the study found that many respondents reported having limited social support networks, citing lack of social connections, geographical isolation, and limited access to community resources. The children might be living long distances due to Education or employment reasons leaving behind elderly alone.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Establishment of a mental health helpline or support services specifically for elderly

individuals, providing easy access to counseling and therapy and Integration of mental health services into existing healthcare services, such as primary care clinics or hospitals.

2. Provision of training and resources for healthcare professionals to address mental health issues in elderly individuals.
3. Implementation of community-based , inclusive programs that promote social interaction and connection among elderly individuals, such as senior centers, volunteer programs, or community events.
4. Proper allocation of funds for transportation services that can help elderly individuals access social events and activities.
5. Introducing public awareness campaigns to promote the importance of prioritizing personal well-being alongside family responsibilities.
6. Provision of training and resources for community leaders to address the impact of cultural norms on mental health.

## **CASE STUDIES**

The first respondent who is 70 years old and is married . He with his spouse in a joint household fair for health. Long-term conditions: elevated blood pressure . Medical check-ups: once every six months , according to him, Senior-focused social activities are few, access to mental health treatments is restricted, and loneliness brought on by children moving abroad for employment are the main issues. He also believes that Families are still strong but are becoming less supportive of the elderly as more families form nuclear families. While traditional norms value elder respect, they may also stifle conversations about mental health.

The second respondent is a 65 years old Woman, who Is Widowed And have Living arrangement as Single. She experiences excellent health. She has none Chronic conditions and have medical visits, One time each year. According to her , A lot of senior citizens struggle financially as a result of their low retirement funds and growing medical

expenses. Stress and worry may result from this, particularly if they are unable to pay for essentials like food or medical treatment. She reported that Impaired care and restricted access to medical services can worsen pre-existing conditions and make older people feel frustrated and powerless. Because they might not be able to take part in community events because of health issues, this might also result in social isolation.

Another respondent is a 72 year old man who is married and lives with his spouse. He experiences good physical and mental health. Some illnesses including Diabetes have attacked him and he has to visit to a healthcare, twice a year, according to him, his children live far away, so I often feel isolated.. Also Traditionally, our families used to live together, but now, with modernization, children move away for work, leaving the elderly alone. It's tough, as we're accustomed to relying on family for support. He also added , Financially, it's tight. I'm retired, and the pension isn't enough to cover all expenses. It adds stress, affecting my mental well-being. Regarding Coping Mechanisms, he stated that he keep himself busy with gardening and visiting the local community center. It helps distract from feelings of loneliness. He says that Men are often expected to be strong and independent, making it harder to ask for help. Women seem to have more support networks. Community gatherings and mosque activities provide some social interaction. It's essential for mental health. Many elders hesitate to seek support due to pride or fear of burdening others. More awareness is needed to overcome this stigma.

According to the demographic data provided in this work, the senior population is predominately male and has a mixed distribution of educational attainment and marital status. They deal with a range of medical conditions, including as long-term conditions like diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and hypertension. They frequently deal with psycho-social issues including social isolation and loneliness, which are frequently disregarded because of stigma. Social and cultural elements like traditional customs and nuclear families also affect how

they see aging. Their well-being may also.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study on psycho-social challenges faced by elderly individuals of Gilgit-Baltistan highlights the significant impact of aging on the mental and emotional well-being of this population. The findings suggest that elderly individuals in Gilgit-Baltistan are vulnerable to various psycho-social challenges, including depression, anxiety, loneliness, and social isolation. These challenges are attributed to factors such as limited access to healthcare, social support, and economic resources, as well as cultural and traditional norms that often prioritize younger family members. The study's results also underscore the importance of addressing the unique needs and concerns of elderly individuals in Gilgit-Baltistan. This includes providing access to healthcare services, promoting social support networks, and fostering community-based initiatives that promote mental health and well-being. Furthermore, it is essential to raise awareness about the psycho-social challenges faced by elderly individuals in this region and promote a culture that values and respects the contributions of older adults. The research outcomes have vital implications for policy and procedures in Gilgit-Baltistan. Firstly, they highlight the need for policymakers to develop and implement targeted interventions aimed at addressing the psycho-social challenges faced by elderly individuals in the region. Secondly, they emphasize the importance of engaging with community-based organizations and stakeholders to develop culturally sensitive and context-specific initiatives that promote the well-being of elderly individuals. In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of addressing the psycho-social challenges faced by elderly individuals in Gilgit-Baltistan. By acknowledging the unique needs and concerns of this population, we can work towards promoting their mental health, well-being, and social inclusion.

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