

## Gender differences in life satisfaction of elderly people

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to assess the relationship of specific domains of life satisfaction with overall life satisfaction of elderly. The study was based upon sample of 400 elderly (200 elderly male samples and 200 elderly female samples) of age range 60 years and above. Results revealed that there were significant difference among elderly males and elderly females in self-reported health satisfaction, family satisfaction, financial satisfaction and life satisfaction and no significant differences were found in personal satisfaction and social satisfaction.

**KEY WORDS :** Elderly life satisfaction, Specific domain satisfaction, Gender and life satisfaction

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### INTRODUCTION

Life satisfaction is one among a range of concepts that is assumed to reflect the conditions of 'a good life'. Diener(1984) defined life satisfaction as "a cognitive judgmental global evaluation of one's life. It may be influenced by effect but is not itself a direct measure of emotion". Life satisfaction is generally measured in one of two ways. Global measures assess overall life satisfaction and are based on the so-called top-down theory of life satisfaction. The theory focuses on a person's ongoing sense of satisfaction as a whole. The domain-specific, bottom-up theory, which holds that overall satisfaction is a product of satisfaction in specific domains, or areas of life, is based on the assumption that we compartmentalize our feelings and assessments of life, and each compartment contributes to overall life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction among the elderly is an important concept as it gives us an overall view of the adjustment as well as adaptive coping ability of the individual. The level of satisfaction among the aged effects not only their psychological adjustment but also physical, emotional and social well-being. The increasing numbers as well as significant changes in the socio-cultural milieu are responsible for the recent emphasis on studies pertaining

to older adults in India. Even though the increasing numbers are attributable to the demographic transition, a decline in the condition of the older population has been the result of fast eroding traditional family system as well as a substantial increase in the migration of adult children from home. Different sorts of challenges are being faced by elderly males and females in the changing scenario. Despite this gender-specific picture, a majority of studies examined in a recent meta-analysis reported only small gender differences in psychological well-being (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001).

Whereas studies like Gold *et al.* (2002); Murtagh and Hubert (2004) found gender differences in level of life satisfaction, which might be expected because women experience more health-related problems than men, are more exposed to functional disability, report lower internal control, more often report loneliness (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2001), are more likely to become widowed and, especially in older cohorts, are exposed to unequal opportunities.

Interestingly, more recent studies in the meta-analysis indicated a tendency towards increasing gender differences in subsequent cohorts; a finding assumed to reflect a change in attitudes and expectations in younger cohorts. Higher aspirations within significant domains enlarge the

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