

## Development of stress scale for aged

■ SHABNAM ANSARI AND RENU DHAKAR

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See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :

**SHABNAM ANSARI**  
Department of Human  
Development and Family  
Studies, College of Home  
Science, Maharana Pratap  
University of Agriculture and  
Technology, UDAIPUR  
(RAJASTHAN) INDIA

■ **ABSTRACT** : The aim of the study was to construct and validate a scale for assessment of stress in aged widows and widowers. The stress scale consisted of 56 questions on various aspects of stress. A pilot study was conducted and forty aged citizens (20 widows and 20 widowers), between the age range of 60 to 80, were selected from Kanpur (U.P.). The content of structured scale was validated by panel members. The reliability and validity of tools were computed. In view of high validity and reliability scores, this tool was found to be an acceptable instrument to assess the level of stress of widows and widowers.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Stress, Scale, Aged citizen, Validation

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**S**tress is a universal phenomenon that often results in intensely distressing experiences that can have a tremendous influence on one's behaviour and is usually associated with a negative feeling (*i.e.* feeling tense, worried and under strain). Stress can generally be defined as any environmental demand or circumstance that creates a threat or state of tension for our well-being, and that requires change, adaptation or exertion of our coping abilities (Morris, 1996).

Certain amounts of stress are a part of life for people of all ages. The stress phenomenon differs from individuals to groups to societies. Children experience stress from school, new social situations and simply growing up. Adults feel the stress of working, paying bills, raising kids and maintaining households. Seniors also feel stress even though some may have retired, raised their children and paid off their homes. For seniors, sometimes stress has the potential to be especially overwhelming. Elderly subjects may present stress symptoms due to physical, psychological and social changes during aging process (Hurlok, 2005). Sometimes the simple tasks of everyday life can cause stress in those who experience physical and or medical limitations. The effects of stress can sometimes exacerbate health conditions from which some seniors suffer, causing additional worry. Loss of spouse, loss of friends and dear ones could be additional causative factors. Many elders living alone in view of widowhood can increase the sense of isolation. However, widowhood can be

associated with additional stressors during old age when living in extended families or else in institutions specifically in Indian context where modernization is affecting the behaviour and attitude of today's generation. Hence, the present research was planned to develop and validate a stress scale applicable to elderly in Indian context. This has been undertaken in view of lack of availability of suitable tools for studying stress of elderly widows and widowers.

### Construction of stress scale :

A thorough review of literature provided an insight for the construction of stress scale. The following aspects were identified for its construction: personal self, health status, financial status, routine activities, personal achievement, familial relationship and social relationship. The sub-aspects covered under each aspect are depicted in Table A. The tool has been developed in Hindi language. In totality 56 questions were incorporated in tool. Five response options have been provided for each question *viz.*, fully agree / agree / agree to some extent/disagree/fully disagree, which are assigned 5,4,3,2,1 marks, respectively. The sum of marks obtained for the entire scale, reflect various level of stress in such a way, that the higher the scores higher is the stress and so on.

### Sample of research :

Forty aged individuals (20 widows and 20 widowers)

Sr. No.	Aspects of stress	Sub-aspects	No. of questions
1.	Personal self	Self identity, self esteem, Self efficacy, Ex. vki dks yxrk gš vki l kkkk; 'kkyh ugh gš ft l l s vki dks ruko gkrk gA	6
2.	Health status	Physical health and fitness, Diseases /illness, Ex- "kjhfd vLofkrrk ds dlj .k vki dks ruko dh flFkr l s xqtjuk i Mrk gA	8
3.	Financial status	Sources of income, Financial planning, Saving, Ex. vkfFkd raxh ds dlj .k vi uh Nk/h&Nk/h t : jrk dks ij k djus ea vl eFkZ egl l djuk ; k nll jk i j vkfJr jguk vki dks rukoxLr dj nrk gA	6
4.	Routine activities	Routine work Pattern, Sleep pattern etc. Ex. nšud dk; l Lo; a djus ea vl eFkZ gkus ds dlj .k vki rukoxLr gš tkrš gA	3
5.	Personal achievement	Achievement at Job, Achievement in family matters, Achievement at Social level Ex. vi uh mi yfC/k; k l s vl lrrqV gkus ds dlj .k i k; % vki rukoxLr jgrš gA	5
6.	Familial relationship	Relationship with spouse, Relationship with children, Relationship with daughter in law, Familial environment Ex. rukoi nll i kfjokfd okrtoj .k ds dlj .k vki rukoxLr jgrš gA	17
7.	Social relationship	Participation in social activities, Social network, Social identity, Pro-social behaviour. Ex. l ekt ea tš LFku vki cukuk pkrš Fkj , d k u gkus ij vki dks ruko jgrk gA	11
Total questions			56

were selected randomly from Kanpur city between the age range of 60-80 years. The subjects were personally contacted for administering the tool. The scale was filled by the researchers as per response of aged widows and widowers.

#### Content validation of stress scale (SS) :

To establish the content validity, the tool was given to specialists from various disciplines (Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Food Science and Nutrition, Family Resource Management, Psychology and Statistics) for their judicious and critical evaluation. The tool was evaluated in terms of content coverage, language, format, suitability, sequence, length of sentences, and clarity of scale on a four point rating scale –very good/good/average/ poor.

#### Assessment of reliability :

Split half method was used to calculate the reliability of the tool.

The experimental findings obtained from the present study have been discussed in following heads:

#### Content validation of stress scale :

The results of content validation are presented in Table 1.

Sr. No.	Content validation indicators	Mean scores
1.	Content coverage	4
2.	Language	3
3.	Format	4
4.	Suitability	4
5.	Length of sentences	3
6.	Clarity	4
Total scores		22
Mean of total scores : 3.67		

\*Range of rating: 1- 1.75 = poor ; 1.76- 2.5= average ; 2.51- 3.25= good ; 3.26- 4= very good

The table clearly indicates that the calculated mean scores of the complete scale was obtained as 3.67 which showed that the scale was good indicator of stress.

#### Reliability co-efficient of the tool :

Table 2 depicts the reliability index of the tool. It clearly shows that the tool was found to be reliable at 0.05 per cent level of significance for widows and widowers both as also for total sample.

Reliability index		
Widows	Widowers	Total sample
**	**	**

\*\* Indicate significance of value at P=0.01

#### Conclusion :

The reliability and validity index of SS suggest that SS is an acceptable instrument to assess the stress of aged widows and widowers. It is hoped that this scale is a good indicator for understanding the level of stress of aged widows and widowers living in extended families and in institutions. This scale will prove to be useful for specialists and scholars of human development and family studies and allied fields. With slight modification this scale can be used for older couples who are living together and for unmarried singles.

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#### Authors' affiliations:

**RENU DHAKAR**, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Science, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, UDAIPUR (RAJASTHAN) INDIA

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