

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF DEPRESSION AMONG ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN IN SELECTED OLD AGE HOMES, JAIPUR, WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOP INFORMATION BOOKLET.

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### ABSTRACT

Aging is a natural process that brings physical, psychological, and social challenges. Depression is a prevalent mental health issue among the elderly, often overlooked, impacting their well-being and quality of life. **Methodology:** The study aimed to assess and compare depression levels among elderly men and women in old age homes and explore associations with demographic variables. A quantitative research approach with a descriptive research design was adopted. The study was conducted at Jeevan Jyoti old age Home, Jaipur, with 60 participants (30 men and 30 women) aged 60 and above, selected through non-probability convenient sampling. Inclusion criteria required participants to be literate in Hindi or English and available during data collection, while those with severe physical illnesses or unwilling to participate were excluded. Data collection involved a socio-demographic questionnaire and the Yesavage Geriatric Depression Scale. **Result:** The study reveals that depression is prevalent among elderly individuals in old age homes, with mild depression being the most common form, particularly among women. While 33.3% of elderly men fall within the normal range, only 23.3% of elderly women do, suggesting that men may have better emotional well-being. Mild depression affects 40% of men and 50% of women, while severe depression is equal (16.6%) in both genders. Statistical analysis shows that while women have slightly higher mean depression scores (15.2) than men (14.4), the difference is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). A significant association was found between depression levels and psychological support among elderly men, while no significant association was found with age, education, marital status, duration of stay, history of illness, or type of family. Among elderly women, no significant association was found between depression levels and any selected demographic variables. **Conclusion:** These findings emphasize the importance of psychological support and mental health interventions to improve the well-being of elderly individuals in old age homes, ensuring better emotional stability and quality of life.

**Keywords:** Depression, Elderly Population, Old Age Homes, Mental Health, Psychological Support

### INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process that brings about various physical, mental, and social transitions. While many associate aging primarily with physical changes such as reduced mobility and chronic illnesses, its impact on mental and emotional well-being is equally significant. One of the most pressing mental health concerns among the elderly is depression, a serious mood disorder that affects millions worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Unlike temporary feelings of sadness, depression is persistent and can severely impact an individual's ability to function in daily life. It is often accompanied by feelings of hopelessness, lack of motivation, sleep disturbances, weight fluctuations, and even thoughts of

suicide. Despite its prevalence, depression in older adults is frequently overlooked or misdiagnosed, as symptoms may manifest in physical complaints rather than emotional distress.<sup>2</sup>

Depression in the elderly can be triggered by multiple factors, including genetic predisposition, stressful life events, and chemical imbalances in the brain. Additionally, chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease can exacerbate depressive symptoms.<sup>3</sup> Social isolation, the loss of loved ones, and a diminished sense of purpose further contribute to the emotional burden. The stigma surrounding mental health in older adults often prevents them from seeking professional help, leading to prolonged suffering and decreased quality of life.<sup>4</sup>

Addressing depression in seniors requires a multifaceted approach that includes medical treatment, therapy, social engagement, and lifestyle changes. Medication, psychotherapy, and support groups can help alleviate symptoms, while regular physical activity, social interaction, and relaxation techniques like yoga and meditation can enhance overall well-being.<sup>5</sup> Encouraging elderly individuals to stay connected with family and friends, engage in meaningful activities, and seek professional support is essential in combating depression. With timely intervention, proper care, and a supportive environment, aging can be a fulfilling phase of life rather than one overshadowed by emotional distress.<sup>2</sup>

## **NEED OF THE STUDY**

The world population is aging rapidly due to declining fertility rates and increased life expectancy. In 2022, when the global population reached 8 billion, 9.7% (776 million) of people were aged 65 and over. By 2050, the older population is projected to double to 9.7 billion globally and 10.4 billion in 2100. In India, aging is a growing concern, with the country having the second-largest elderly (60+) population in the world. The senior population has increased from 41% in 1950 to 7.6% in 2000, and by 2050, an estimated 21.3% of India's population will be aged 65 years and older. Aging is often associated with physical decline, frailty, and psychological changes that impact overall well-being.<sup>6</sup>

As people grow older, they often experience multiple health conditions, including urinary incontinence, diabetes, hypertension, visual and hearing impairments, dementia, and depression. Depression is particularly prevalent, affecting about 19-33% of community dwellers aged 65 and above and is one of the most common mental health disorders, impacting 449 million people worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression was predicted to become the second-largest global health problem by 2030, leading to increased disability and mortality.<sup>7</sup>

Depression among the elderly is often difficult to diagnose, as many older adults do not exhibit classical symptoms. Studies suggest that many elderly individuals experience depression due to social isolation, lack of family support, and reduced cultural connections, making them unable to actively engage in community life. Aging leads to the loss of friendships, making it harder for the elderly to build new social networks.<sup>7</sup>

A cross-sectional study conducted in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, among 80 elderly individuals aged 60-85 years in old age homes found that 53.75% of them experienced depression. The study revealed that depression increased with age, affecting 47.92% of the young-old (60-69 years), 57.69% of the

middle-old (70-79 years), and 83.33% of those aged 80 and above. Depression was more common among females (58.82%) than males (44.83%). Furthermore, depression rates were higher among widows/widowers (67.57%) and divorced/separated individuals (63.63%) compared to those living with a spouse (33.33%) or those who had never married (40%).<sup>8</sup>

This study highlights the critical need for psychological support, social engagement, and mental health awareness among the elderly. Addressing mental health concerns, providing emotional support, and creating opportunities for social interaction can help reduce depression among older adults, ensuring a better quality of life for aging populations worldwide.

## **AIM OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to comparatively assess the level of depression among elderly men and women residing in selected old age homes in Jaipur. It seeks to identify the intensity and severity of depression in both genders, analyze the contributing factors, and highlight the differences in prevalence and impact. Based on the findings, the study intends to develop an information booklet to enhance awareness, provide coping strategies, and promote mental well-being among elderly individuals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Objectives of study**

- To assess the level of depression among elderly men and women in old age homes.
- To compare the level of depression among elderly men and women in old age homes.
- To associate the level of depression among elderly men and women with their selected demographic variables.
- To develop and administer an information booklet to create awareness regarding the availability of coping strategies to overcome with the depression.

### **Research Approach**

The study adopts a quantitative research approach to systematically assess and compare the levels of depression among elderly men and women residing in selected old age homes in Jaipur.

### **Research Design**

A descriptive research design was selected to analyze the prevalence and severity of depression among the elderly population in old age homes.

### **Target Population**

The target population for this study comprised elderly men and women aged 60 years and above, residing in old age homes in Jaipur.

### **Study Setting**

The study was conducted at Jeevan Jyoti old age Home, Jaipur.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

A total of 60 participants (30 elderly men and 30 elderly women) aged above 60 years were selected for the study. A non-probability convenient sampling method was employed to recruit participants.

## Criteria for Sample Selection

Inclusion Criteria:

- ✓ Elderly men and women aged 60 years and above, residing in the old age home.
- ✓ Those who can read and write Hindi or English.
- ✓ Elderly individuals available at the time of data collection.

Exclusion Criteria:

- ✗ Elderly individuals not willing to participate in the study.
- ✗ Those suffering from severe physical or debilitating illnesses.
- ✗ Elderly individuals unable to read or write Hindi or English.
- ✗ Those not available during the data collection period.

## Data Collection Instrument

For data collection, two structured tools were used:

Tool 1: Socio-demographic Questionnaire – Used to gather information on participants' age, gender, educational status, marital status, psychological status, duration of stay, physical illness and family type.

Tool 2: Yesavage Geriatric Depression Scale (Long Form,) – A standardized tool to assess the level of depression among the elderly.

## Reliability of the Tool

The reliability of the Yesavage Geriatric Depression Scale was established using the Split-Half method with Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.82$ ), ensuring high reliability and consistency of the tool.

## RESULT

### Socio-demographic variables of the participants

- **Frequency and percentage distribution of elderly women**
  - Age: Majority (70%) are 75 years and above, indicating an aging population in the old age home.
  - Education: 80% are educated, suggesting a literate elderly population.
  - Marital Status: 93.3% are married, with very few widowed (3.3%) or single (3.3%).
  - Psychological Support: 50% lack psychological support, highlighting the need for better emotional care.

- Duration of Stay: 50% have stayed for over a year, showing long-term residency trends.
- Physical Illness: 26.6% have a history of illness, while 73.3% are physically stable.

The findings emphasize the need for enhanced psychological support, social engagement, and healthcare services for the elderly in old age homes to improve their overall well-being.

- **Frequency and percentage distribution of elderly women**

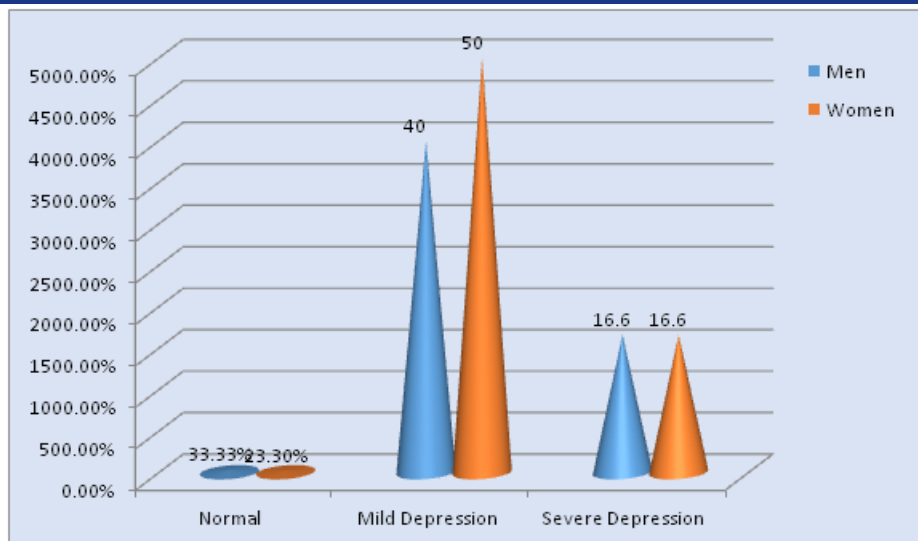
- Age: The majority (63.3%) are aged 75 years and above, indicating a significant aging population in the old age home.
- Education: 66.6% are educated, while 33.3% are uneducated, showing a moderately literate elderly population.
- Marital Status: 60% are married, while 33.3% are widows, indicating a higher vulnerability to loneliness among widows.
- Psychological Support: 80% receive psychological support, but 20% lack it, highlighting the need for improved emotional care.
- Duration of Stay: 40% have stayed for over a year, suggesting long-term residency.
- Physical Illness: 53.3% have a history of illness, showing a high prevalence of medical conditions.
- Family Type: 83.3% belong to nuclear families, indicating a shift away from joint or extended family systems.

The data highlight a growing elderly population in nuclear families, with high physical illness prevalence and widows being at higher risk of loneliness. While most receive psychological support, targeted interventions are needed to enhance mental and physical well-being in old age homes.

### **Level of Depression among Elderly Men and Women.**

The data in fig 1 indicates that depression is prevalent among elderly individuals in old age homes, with varying severity levels between men and women. Among elderly men, 33.3% fall within the normal range, experiencing no significant depressive symptoms, whereas only 23.3% of elderly women are in this category, suggesting that men may have better emotional well-being. However, the majority of both groups experience mild depression, with 40% of men and 50% of women falling into this category. This highlights that women are more susceptible to depressive symptoms compared to men. In terms of severe depression, both groups show an equal prevalence, with 16.6% of elderly men and women experiencing major depressive symptoms.

The findings emphasize that mild depression is the most common form of mental distress among elderly individuals, particularly among women. The lower percentage of men experiencing depression suggests they may have better coping mechanisms or support systems. However, the presence of severe depression in both genders highlights the need for targeted mental health interventions, social engagement programs, and therapeutic support in old age homes. Addressing these issues through counseling, recreational activities, and emotional support systems can significantly improve the well-being of elderly individuals and reduce the impact of depression on their quality of life.



**Fig 1: Level of Depression among Elderly Men and Women.**

- **Range, Mean and SD of level of depression among elderly men and women.**

**Table 1: – Range, Mean and SD of level of depression among elderly men and women.**

S. No	Group	Max score	Range	Mean	SD	Mean %
1	Elderly men	30	2-23	14.4	5.9	48
2	Elderly Women	30	2-22	15.2	6.1	50.66

The table provides statistical measures of depression levels among elderly men and women residing in old age homes, including range, mean, standard deviation (SD), and mean percentage.

The range of depression scores for elderly men is 2 to 23, whereas for elderly women, it is 2 to 22. This indicates that depression severity varies among individuals, but the overall distribution is similar for both genders.

The mean depression score is 14.4 for elderly men and 15.2 for elderly women, suggesting that women, on average, experience slightly higher depression levels than men. This is also reflected in the mean percentage, where women have a 50.66% depression level, compared to 48% for men.

The standard deviation (SD), which measures the spread of depression scores, is 5.9 for men and 6.1 for women, indicating a slightly higher variation in depression levels among elderly men than women.

The findings suggest that while both elderly men and women experience depression, women tend to have slightly higher levels of depression on average. This highlights the need for mental health interventions, particularly focusing on elderly women, through emotional support, counseling, and social activities to improve their psychological well-being.

- **Comparison level of depression among elderly men and women.**

The table presents a comparative analysis of depression levels between elderly men and women using the mean, standard deviation (SD), and unpaired t-test value to determine statistical significance.

- The mean depression score for elderly men is 14.4, while for elderly women, it is 15.2. This indicates that, on average, elderly women experience slightly higher levels of depression than men.
- The standard deviation (SD) for men is 5.9, while for women, it is 6.1, suggesting a higher variability in depression levels among men compared to women.
- The unpaired t-test value is 1.34, with a p-value greater than 0.05 ( $P > 0.05$ , NS - Not Significant).

Although elderly women tend to have slightly higher depression levels, the difference is not statistically significant. This indicates that both genders are equally vulnerable to depression, reinforcing the need for mental health awareness, emotional support, and social interventions for all elderly individuals, regardless of gender.

### **Association between level of depression among elderly men with their selected demographic variables**

There is a statistically significant association between the level of depression and psychological support whereas there is no statistically significant association between the level of depression with age, educational status, marital status, duration of stay, history of physical illness and type of family in elderly men.

### **Association between levels of depression among elderly women with their demographic variables.**

There is no statistically significant association between the level of depression among elderly women with age, educational status, marital status, psychological support, duration of stay, history of physical illness and types of the family.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study aimed to compare the levels of depression among elderly men and women living in old age homes and to determine the association between depression and selected socio-demographic variables. The findings revealed that both elderly men and women experience similar levels of depression, with no statistically significant difference between the two groups ( $t = 1.34$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

This indicates that gender does not significantly impact the depression levels among the elderly residing in old age homes. Hence, the hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) stating that there is a significant difference in depression levels between elderly men and women was rejected.

The findings contradict the study conducted by Reddemma et al. (2014), which found a significant difference in depression levels between men and women ( $t = 3.3790$ , significant at 2.365 level). This variation suggests that external factors such as social support, past life experiences, and coping mechanisms may influence depression levels more than gender alone.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, the study revealed that psychological support plays a crucial role in reducing depression, particularly among elderly men ( $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that men who receive emotional support, family visits, and social interactions experience lower depression levels. However, among elderly women, there was no statistically significant association between depression and socio-demographic variables, indicating that factors beyond basic demographics might influence their mental well-being. This finding contradicts the study by Ranjan et al. (2017), which found a significant association between depression and physical illness history.<sup>10</sup>

Overall, the study highlights the importance of psychological support in managing depression among elderly individuals in old age homes. Reassurance, family interactions, and social engagement can significantly improve emotional well-being. Future research should explore why gender differences do not significantly impact depression levels and investigate other potential contributing factors to elderly mental health.

## CONCLUSION

Aging is an inevitable process that brings various physical, psychological, and social challenges. Depression is one of the most common mental health concerns among the elderly, often going unnoticed and untreated. This study aimed to assess the level of depression among elderly men and women living in old age homes and explore the role of psychological support in their mental well-being.

Depression in older adults can stem from multiple factors, including loss of loved ones, social isolation, chronic illness, and lack of emotional support. It affects their overall quality of life, leading to low self-esteem, reduced motivation, and increased health risks. Many elderly individuals in old age homes experience loneliness, which can worsen depressive symptoms. Addressing this requires regular psychological support, family visits, meaningful social interactions, and engagement in activities that promote emotional well-being.

The study underscores the importance of providing mental health support to elderly individuals to help them cope with emotional distress. Encouraging participation in social, recreational, and therapy-based interventions can significantly improve their mental well-being. Awareness programs, counseling services, and strong emotional support systems must be incorporated into elderly care to ensure a better quality of life in old age homes.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors certify that they have no involvement in any organization or entity with any financial or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this paper.

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