

## Values Transformation and Status of Aged in Punjab

### *Abstract*

*The present study explores the changing values and their impact on the status of the aged in Pakistani society. This study was conducted under quantitative research design. A sample of 256 aged individuals was selected from three cities i.e. Lahore, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi. A cross sectional survey was conducted through a structured interview schedule to get the required data. Uni-variate and bi-variate analysis were performed to find out the causal relationship between variables and to test the pre-designed hypotheses. Research findings of the study suggested that declining joint family system, low level of religiosity, increasing modernization, economic dependence and declining male decision making in the family are the changes in the values that are responsible for lower social status of aged in the selected population.*

**Keywords:** *Changing values, religiosity, modernization, patriarchy, status of aged*

### INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations World Population Ageing Report (2017), the global population of aged people i.e. 60 years and above is estimated to be 962 million. Due to the rapid increase in the number of older people, the report further estimates that by 2050 their number is expected to reach 2.1 billion. It is significant to note that approximately two-thirds of the world's total older persons live in developing countries, and by 2050, it is estimated that nearly 8 in 10 of the world's older persons will be living in developing countries. For developing countries like Pakistan that are already facing severe challenges to provide socioeconomic opportunities and basic facilities to the people, it would be a serious challenge to address the specific needs of the older persons and engage them in productive aging. Macionis (1997) considers

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values to be social standards that people try to follow and are associated with. Values draw the attention of people towards desirability and appropriateness and become ultimate goals in society. Values play a crucial role in the regulation of social life, thus guaranteeing the social order and smooth functioning of social systems. Zehra (2004) noted that social values are constituted with our roles in society and expectations of being men or women. She further indicated truth, care, peace, duty, justice, religiosity and authority of parents as prominent values of Pakistani society. Iqbal (1984) also considered education, parental mate selection, large family, truth, honesty, justice, and wealth as social values of Pakistani society.

Modernization is considered as a process of change from traditional society based on agricultural economy and conservative orientation, to modern society based on industry, production, use of modern technology, urban life, a scientific, rational world view and liberal orientation. In a society like Pakistan, modernization affects traditional knowledge and gives way to systematic knowledge gained from Western society. Over time modernization has transformed the traditions, values and culture of Pakistani society. Modernization is a powerful but uncertain force in society and it has serious impact on the social structure of societies as it brings massive cultural change. This change is frequently linked with the weakening of traditional norms and values structures. Family is often considered prime social institution after economy and bears the consequences of modernization. Family ensures the transmission of the cultural storehouse of knowledge including norms, values and beliefs from one generation to another through the process of socialization. Family restrictions and social control keep these values alive. However, under the influence of modernization values are getting weaker and result in weakening of family tradition and control. The inevitable result can be breaking of the family authority, family ties and the family itself.

Modernization affects the authority of parents and their relationship with their children. Aging is a broad concept that includes physical changes in our body throughout adult life, psychological changes in our mind and mental capacities, social psychological changes in what we think and believe and social changes in how we are viewed, what we can expect and what is expected of us. Aged people know about many unrecorded events that have taken place over the years in families, in the workplace, in communities, and throughout the nation. Old age can be a time of extraordinary freedom and opportunity once the responsibilities of employment and child rearing are set aside (Hoyert & Donna, 1992). The process of aging is an ingredient in individual personality development, self-concept and mental life. It shapes social interaction, group formation and social structures. It is also a component of the cultural codes; people used to negotiate with each other and to their environment. Contemporary thinking about human development treats the life span as

an integrated, contagious set of age-related events from birth to death with which people cope in a variety of ways. Aging is a socially constructed category with the experience of aging varying in different societies and changing over time. The status of the aged also varies or changes accordingly. Almost all societies are age graded and have some form of age related social hierarchy with some people in stronger, more dominant positions, and others in weaker or lower positions. Often this inequity is built into the social system itself through various forms of structural components and institutions. Social and economic roles are distinguished and accorded differential status according to what a particular society or culture deems valuable (Fink & Moore, 1996). Social stratification is associated with the ability of individuals to live up to some set of ideals or principles regarded as important by the society or some social group within it (Harold, 1998).

Due to advancement in science, life expectancy is increasing leading to an increase in the total population of aged people. This extraordinary increase in aged people has socio-cultural and economic implications. This process has brought about great change in life and kinship bonds and is also weakening the family system (UN, 1992). The changing values are directly linked to modernization. According to Baqai, (1975) industrialization and technological progress have brought about a transition in Pakistani society. He also stated that rural people are conservative; they do not want to change their values but with the spread of education, mass media and increased contact with urban lifestyle their values are changing. The older generation is conservative and stands as a custodian of the traditional values while the younger generation is slowly experiencing modernity. He is of the view that Pakistan is a society which was traditional and is now progressing towards modernity and that the cultural values of Pakistani society are in a transitional stage.

The status of aged people in modern industrialized societies is lower as compared with traditional societies; one reason being that the knowledge and information possessed by older people is considered outdated. Due to rapid technological development and social change, memory is no longer needed because traditions are written down while modern education and training make their skills easily replaceable (Kimmel, 1990). When a society is in the process of modernizing its infrastructure, the living conditions, education system, and healthcare system also experience change. The importance of the older people decreases, their skills and experiences are devalued. Young ones learn their traits from outside the family circle. Due to declining importance of the aged they develop feelings of isolation and detachment from their family. Modernization creates a break between past, present and the future because modern men and women are living differently from their parents and grandparents. These trends have affected the social status of the aged and this study seeks to explore the factors responsible for the declining status.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of population ageing, mainly due to reduction of mortality and fertility, has gained great concern in the circle of academics and policy makers. The demographic transition which took more than a hundred years in developed countries has taken only a few decades in developing countries. Like some other developing countries, ageing has becoming a major concern of Pakistan, where the population of aged people is predicted to increase up to 42 million by 2050 (Ali & Kiani, 2003; UN, 2002). In a traditional society like Pakistan, aged people want to live with their family. Furthermore, sometimes conventional young people also want to live with their family. The study of Ali & Kiani(2003) shows that aged people who are living with their family have a better life as compared to the aged people who are living in the nuclear family. Due to increasing age, declining mental and physical abilities aged people need constant support from family members. At times extra workload and multiple assignments do not allow the young to give proper time and attention to the aged people. This leads to loneliness and frustration in the aged.

According to Kimmel (1990) the status of aged men may differ from the status of aged women because women generally face less difficulty than men do and women face less discontinuity and expected behavior as they get older. In the past when life expectancy was low people used to live in joint and extended family systems. The aged people of the family enjoyed respect, not only in their family but also in the community and neighborhood. Modernization and advancement in medicine resulting in higher life expectancy associated with demographic changes have affected the family status of aged, due to which the elderly population is experiencing difficulties. Hakim & Aziz (1998) state that Islam, being a code of life, is the source of the Pakistani value system. It has also influenced all aspects of life and is an important consideration in implementing policies. Joint family is an important aspect of Pakistani society and such a family is headed by the eldest male of the family who also occupies the position of supreme authority.

Aged people may experience economic issues because of limited sources for living. Another problem is the loss that the aged population faces due to their retirement from the workplace. The status of the aged is a matter of concern throughout the world but the severity of the issue varies from country to country. Growing old may be regarded as a time of ripeness and fulfillment or a period of declining health and failing powers. There is nothing inherently problematical about growing old. And yet in most nations of the world, old age is increasingly understood in "social problem" terms. Human beings must age and eventually any cultural belief system that cannot provide security, meaning, and self-esteem for those who reach the conclusion of life's natural sequences will have to change (Sjaak, 1999). Saeed, Shoaib & Ilyas

(2011) state that the elderly need a suitable living environment, admiration, health care, support and an environment for recreational activities. The status of aged people in Pakistan has changed with the advent of modernization. Many of the elderly people are not supported by their respective families and face issues in terms of respect, care, isolation, poor health and physical abuse. Even some elderly individuals do not get proper attention in joint family set up due to large family size. This situation indicates that the quality of life of older people in Pakistan is likely to deteriorate and raise the demand for social protection nets for the older people in the coming years. The rising trends of poverty in Pakistan and declining share of economically active population will not only affect the quality of life of older people but also underscore the need for adequate provision of safety nets for the older people (Ahmad & Hafeez, 2011).

Technological developments due to industrialization, westernization, and urbanization have compromised these statuses by weakening the unity and integrity of the joint family. Moreover, the emergence of achieved properties like wealth, education etc. has colonized the mindset of the youths by adopting the individualistic values of the West. Today, aged people may have to face social, economic and psychological problems because of these profound changes in the position of older people in the family and society (Gulzar, Zafar, Ahmad, & Ali, 2008). The study of Siddiqui, Anwar, & Perveen (2009) showed that residents of walled city with a higher status are compared to the residents of Allama Iqbal Town, Lahore, and the reasons were loneliness, physical dependence, isolation and male dominance. The walled city is a traditional area where people are connected with each other, share problems and spend time together, whereas Allama Iqbal Town is a modern locality where people are not well connected with each other and have very limited interaction with neighbors. According to Sabzwari & Azhar (2011) despite being a socially organized society, the decline of extended family systems is evident. This has not only affected the revered status the elderly enjoyed in the past, but the social system that allowed our elders to maintain positions of decision making has also declined, leaving their social standing diminished.

The extended family system in Pakistan helps to provide an opportunity to family members to act as caregivers to the elderly living with them. This care-giving leads to greater satisfaction among them in comparison with care provided by paid caregivers. In the present era of economic recession and with increasing financial constraints on the individual families, the extended family model is being replaced by the nuclear family model which is the basis for further deterioration of the situation (Qidwai & Ashfaq, 2011). In the past, a significant proportion of the aged people was living in the nuclear family system, showing that the joint family is gradually breaking down into nuclear family system and the trend these days is more towards nuclear family than the joint family system. People like to live with their spouses and children but

apart from their parents (Gulzar et al., 2008). The study of Arif & Ahmed (2010) shows the conventional means of support for aged people through strong inter-generational family ties that are likely to dry up as the joint family system in Pakistani society is slowly breaking down. It is directly affecting the status of the aged people in Pakistan. Ibrahim, Abbassi, Adnan & Bhatti (2010) in their research found that under the impact of modernization people are witnessing the breakdown of the traditional extended family setup.

Religious activities are the source of spiritual support and provide chances to interact with people having similar values and beliefs. Participation in religious activities helps the older people to manage health problems and depression. A considerable proportion of aged people viewed illness as a spiritual problem and considered religion as an important tool to manage depression. Religious pursuits help reduce disease related stress (Ahmad & Hafeez, 2011). Islam has made it obligatory for the young to give full reverence and respect to their parents. The Holy Quran has emphasized upon children to be good with their parents, and The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has also highlighted the significant position of elders by stating that when a vulnerable person in old age even from another clan comes to you, you give him respect and Allah Almighty will reciprocate with acts of kindness in your old age. However, due to modernization and industrialization religion has lost its hold on people and is adversely affecting the status of the aged (Muhammad, Jan, Shah, & Ahmad, 2009).

The research study of Perveen (2008) indicated that quick changes are observed in our social structures: inflation, urbanization, refugees, industrialization, and many other factors contribute to change. Traditional customs and social values are breaking down. Sociologically it may be concluded that our culture is changing under the impact of the modern age. Nizamuddin (2011) observes that most aged people in Punjab live with their married sons whereas a few live with their unmarried daughters. The study also found that most aged people are engaged in unpaid labor at home. Retired old persons do not get the affection or attention they expect from their family or community. However, the study of Afzal (1999) pointed out that most aged people wanted to continue to work. They feel themselves to be an economic liability and consider it one of the major factors for lowering their status in the family.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A sample of 256 aged males and females, was selected from three cities; namely Lahore, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi randomly. The selection of the cities was made keeping in view the similarities in socio-economic and demographic profiles and generalization of the findings. A survey was conducted through a structured interview

schedule to get the required data. The collected data were presented in tabular format indicating percentages and frequencies. Uni-variate and bi-variate analyses were performed to find out the causal relationship between the variables. Pre-designed hypotheses were also tested to check the relationships between desired variables. The study was limited to the aged people living in urban areas of the selected cities.

### Objective

To find out the factors causing change in the values set and to gauge the resultant impact on the status of the aged.

### Hypotheses

- Family income is associated with the status of the aged
- Modernization is associated with the status of the aged
- Religiosity is associated with the status of the aged
- Patriarchy is associated with the status of the aged

## RESULTS & ANALYSIS

### Socio-economic and Demographic Profile

The study recruited 256 respondents. Amongst them 73% (n=187) were males while 27% (n=69) were females. The age of the respondents ranged from 60 years to 75 years. However, the majority of the respondents 54% (n=139) were from age group 60-65 followed by 31% (n=79) from age group 66-70 years. Overwhelming majority i.e. 79% (n=202) were married however 18% (n=46) were the widower at the time of the interview. Joint family was the dominant pattern of family in the research area 74% (n=190) followed by 26% (n=67) respondents living in a nuclear family. The education of the respondents indicated that 58% (n=148) were educated to matriculate level and 32% (n=82) were graduates. The majority of the respondents i.e. 73% (n= 186) had family income ranging from 30,000/- to 50,000/- per month.

**Table 1** *Bivariate Analysis*

Variables	Status of Aged		
	Lambda	Gamma	Chi square
Family Income	.068	-.094	25.46
Modernization	.073	.401	25.79
Religiosity	.091	.195	40.15
Patriarchy	.47	.416	47.84

Level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$   $p < 0.05$

The present research intends to determine the factors responsible for the transformation of Pakistani values and resultant lowering status of the aged. The present study corroborates the existing scholarship on gerontology in Pakistan. The

study confirms that poor financial arrangement in joint family setup is intriguing dependence. This factor is lowering the status of the aged. Previous scholarship (Nizamuddin, 2011; Qidwai & Ashfaq, 2011; Gulzar et al., 2008; Perveen, 2007; Ali & Kiani, 2003; Afzal, 1999; Dar, 1996) has clearly established the interplay of economic dependence and joint family in lowering the social status of aged. The research indicated the economic dependence as one of the major factors.

Arif & Ahmed (2010) point out that conventional support for aged people through strong inter-generational family ties are dying down because of the social crack in the joint family system. Increasing use of technology, particularly in the urban areas, is inculcating modern values in the people. The process is generally termed modernization. Perveen (2007) has indicated growing trends of urbanization, industrialization resulting speedy social changes in Pakistani society. She emphasized that customs, traditions and social values are bearing more consequences. Ibrahim, Abbasi, Adnan & Bhatti (2010) in their research observed that modernization has resulted in changes in every sphere of social interaction, and particularly in family. Large families are shrinking into nuclear one. Siddiqui, Anwar, & Perveen (2009) also find out that urbanization and industrialization have changed the family setup. Family structure is transforming from extended/ joint to nuclear. They also highlighted the changing status of the elderly in a family. The study determined the low level of religiosity as one of the causes of lower status of old in the study area.

A research study has documented that religious activities are the source of spiritual support and provide chances to interact with people having similar values and beliefs (Ahmad & Hafeez, 2011). Due to modernization and industrialization religion has lost its grip on people and this has adversely affected the status of the aged (Niaz Muhammad, Jan, Shah, & Ahmad, 2009). Malik (2003) has observed that modernization has deeply impacted Pakistani society. Many of the rituals and traditions which were once strictly adhered to, are no longer followed enthusiastically. It was also pointed out that young people are less likely to abide by the traditional values. It was also observed that decision making was in the hands of males and particularly the elderly. However, due to multiple factors the decision making is slipping from the hands of male elderly people. Sabzwari & Azhar (2011) state that the declining joint family has resulted in the weak decision making position of the aged in the family. Now the elderly are in a disadvantaged position, whereas the young and productive (economical) members of the family are taking over. This trend is making the aged population marginalized thus enhancing their economic and social dependence. Kimmel, (1990) highlighting the gender concerns, found that women are less disadvantaged as far as the social and economic positions are concerned. Women generally face less difficulty and less discontinuity in their expected behavior in old age. The present study came up with similar findings.

Elderly women even enjoy a more powerful status in old age. Culturally constructed social statuses are backed by the religious dictums which elevate the status of aged women. It can be concluded that social transformation is causing very serious challenges to the socio-cultural fabric of Pakistani society and family is not an exception. The elderly are becoming more vulnerable to this social transformation. However, strengthening of familial arrangements can provide social support to the elderly in Pakistani society.

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