


# Socio-economic and Transportation Issues of Elderly People in National Capital Region (NCR), India

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## Article Info

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**Abstract**
Respect to elders is an integral part of our culture. Helps to tender in any form to elders are considered as a sacred/ service to God. This continued till we had a system of joint family. Due to the rapid urbanization, the joint family system has been broken down. The elders are finding it difficult to sustain themselves in old age due to growing of the nuclear families, migration of their children to the big cities/ abroad for work and increasing longevity. As a result, senior citizens are facing a number of problems like social, health and financial insecurity. Delhi –NCR has a total population of over 4.7 crores and more than 8% of the total Delhi & NCR population consists of elderly persons (60+). With fast changing socio-economic and demographic scenario, growing popularity of nuclear families and fast changing traditional value system, the needs of older persons have also changed vehemently. 100 respondents were interviewed from Delhi NCR during Feb – April 2024. The study also revealed that elderly people have fewer decisions to make when it comes to an economic decision and spending pattern. The paper also discusses the loopholes of the current policies and schemes and their effect on ageing.

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**Keywords:** Delhi –NCR, Social Issues, Elderly Population, Transportation Services, Economic Issues

## Introduction

Across the world, the elderly population is increasing continuously and it is expected that in the next few decades, most of the elderly people would be in the developing countries. The term "old" is normally associated with physical disability, biological worsening and psychological weakness. The current globalization and modernization brought improved living standards with better health facilities, leading to low mortality rates and higher life expectancy. However, within the Indian context, there are three trends that utterly intimidating the chances of achieving a healthy lifestyle. These trends include the growing age-old population, the steady dismantle of the traditional joint family structure and the failure of the government to come off with a sustainable support system for elderly people (Vaidyanathan, 2003) [14]. So far the issue of health and social security is a concern, most of the elderly in India don't avail the institutionalized income generating activities and programs.

However, in the last few decades, the changing scenario of traditional society and the acceptance of modern values and practices significantly affected the position and status of elderly people (Jamuna, 2000) [3]. The government of India adopted several approaches to support the elder population in the country after independence. A few programs support the elderly person in the organized sectors includes a provident fund, Non-Contributory Pension Schemes (NCPS) and Gratuity. There is a scheme for the poor age old person in unorganized sectors such as Old Age Pension Scheme. But these schemes have failed to cover the basic needs and enabled to provide adequate caring and support system which leads to their low social status, economic incapacity, helplessness and vulnerability. No initiatives have been taken to address the problem of accessibility in transport and proper communication for elderly by the government (Raturi, 2008) [12]. Moreover, changing the socio-economic atmosphere, endemic poverty, dismantles of the joint family; degradation of cultural values and norms becomes obstacles for the old age

people to adjust to the new atmosphere (Bhatia, 1983).

This paper mainly covers three major issues of elderly population in NCR. These include social status, economic condition and transportation challenges of the elderly persons in Delhi in the wake of the changing demographic scenario. These three issues are studied by taking various indicators such as social isolation, the source of income, availability of public transport, etc. It also addresses the genuine concerns and challenges of elderly people in NCR region and the attentions that need to be paid for to ensure the healthy life of elderly people.

**Objectives**

1. The primary objective of the study is to understand the socio-economic challenges faced by the elderly and their attitude towards life at large.
2. To examine the transportation facilities and its challenges especially for elderly people.
3. To address the drawback of schemes for elderly population in NCR.

**Literature Review**

Rapid growth of the elderly population is an outcome of demographic transition. Now many countries across the globe started paying attention to the issues and challenges of elderly people, particularly those developed nations who have controlled the fertility rate and reduced down the mortality to a substantial level. Because of these changes, there are greater consequences and implications for overall growth, economic prosperity, health care status and educational advancement of a country (UN, 2000b & OECD 1997.

**Global Scenario**

The majority of the population is ageing across the globe, with relatively high proportions of people aged sixty-five and over in developed countries and rapid increases of elderly populations in developing countries (Kinsella, 2000). In all OECD nations (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the age ratio is rising and it is expected to be continued throughout the twenty-first century (OECD 2009). This trend has a number of implications for government spending on pensions and healthcare and, more generally, for economic growth and welfare. Misra (2011) [8] focuses broadly on the features of social security system in India and Japan and makes a critical review of the lessons to be learnt from Japan's experiences. Japan developed a universal security system at an early stage of development with proper synergy between public and private agencies. At present, according to him, India's policy should be more on social security schemes, which are humane and sustainable. Bearden and Soest (2010) studied show a relationship between person's economic status, health situation, social alienation, consumer satisfaction, living satisfaction and overall satisfaction with life by path analysis. One of the findings of their study was that financial situation might not directly impact the elderly life satisfaction, but financial concerns do affect the elderly persons through shifts in expenditure decisions on different heads.

According to Hossain (2004) [6], the traditional support systems prevailing in Bangladesh are Islamic teachings and traditional practices of alms. The Holy Quran proclaimed various principles in support of the elderly, which have had a far-reaching impact on traditional values and practices. But due to mismanagement and undesirable practices these welfare systems have been embittered and tempered by evil expectations. Menon and Nakamura studied about the ageing and impacts in Asia and its subcontinent. They found that age-specific behavior can be significantly changed by population ageing. For example, a decrease in fertility rate lead to higher participation of women in working force or longer life period can lead to longer working lives. Gavrilov and Heuveline (2003) clearly mentioned that the most rapid growth occurs in the older age groups and ageing is found to be connected with poverty, particularly in developing countries. According to them, the demographic determinants of ageing, such as fertility rate and mortality rates have different influences on the age structure of a population as time passes.

**Indian Scenario**

India holds the second rank among the countries in terms of the growing ageing population just after China. The proportion of persons aged sixty and above in India rose from 5.5% in 1951 to about 8.3 % in 2011 (Rath and Das, 2011) [11]. Prakash (1999) [10] detailed out the demographic transition in India, while defining the present and future situation of ageing in India. She has profiled the aged population's social security, health care, morbidity, mental health, financial condition, living arrangements, social status, gender, urban and rural differences, migrants and refugees, slum dwellers, HIV and AIDS. She concludes that providing necessary care and security to elderly people within the community setting is recommended instead of opening more old age centers. Tripathi (1999) [13] highlights the traditional support base of elderly people even in rural areas is being shaken by rising inflation and increasing pauperization. The situation is worse in urban areas as a consequence of modernization, population pressure, poverty, media and mass communication. According to Batra (2004), ageing is not only chronological or biological in nature, but the other factor like culture, social and psychological aspects also play a crucial role in defining elderly in India. Chakraborty (2008) [2] explores the physical, psychological and socio-economic problems faced by the elderly persons of Tripura and found that psychological factors are to be more deeply analyzed than socio-economic factors in the case of older people. ). In a study by Mutharayappa and Bhat (2008), NFHS-2 data were analyzed to examine the type of lifestyle adopted by the elderly and its effects on their health conditions. "It was found that lifestyle adversely affects health and increases morbidity conditions among the elderly. Lifestyle habits such as alcohol consumption, regular smoking and tobacco chewing have adverse effects on one's ability to control diseases."A study by Alam (2006), indicates that the majority of the elderly suffer from curtailed functional abilities in physical (eating, bathing, dressing, walking, climbing stairs, getting-up from a sitting position, etc.) as well as in sensory (hearing and vision) health domains. Balagopal (2009) have examined morbidity among 206 sampled elderly in an urban slum in Chennai, which showed that 40.5% of ailments of the elderly were not medically treated and the two most important reasons for not seeking care were financial problems and the perception that the ailment was not serious. Public transportation ensures access to essential services and helps older adults stay socially connected to their communities. With limited transportation options older people have to forego some of their travel needs to make only

essential trips (UN, 2017). In their study Patil & Bailey (2023) [9] found that public transport connectivity to the urban periphery is very sparse or not available making it difficult for elder to access health services

## Material and Methods

The data for the study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected at two levels; one, at the official level in order to know their approach towards existing policies related to the elderly population. The second one was with the families, communities and other related stakeholders to understand the social, economic and transportation of aged group. A pilot study was conducted to get the requisite information. The information obtained through the pilot study was used to improve the structure of the research tools. Subsequently, 100 elderly respondents have been covered in National Capital Region (NCR) to assess the socio-economic conditions and transportation issues of older people. Purposive sampling has been used as per the requirements of the study. Research tools like interview scheduled, questionnaire and focused group discussion were used.

## Data Analysis/Result

Responses from the questionnaire were carefully entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS version 22). A detailed analysis was performed with the data keeping in mind the objectives of the study. Descriptive analysis, Cross tabulation and Frequency analysis were used for data analysis and making interpretations.

Table 1 highlights the information related to the sample. Minimum age of the sample was 60 and maximum age was 80. The average mean of the age was 67.49 with a standard deviation of 4.74.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of the Sample Size

| Total Sample Size | Minimum Age | Maximum Age | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 60.00 | 80.00 | 67.4900 |

## Socio-Demographic Details of Population

The table 2 shows over 34% of the elderly population living in Delhi & National Capital Region have a monthly income between Rs. 10000 –Rs. 25000. There is a significant percentage of people (23%) earn less than 2000 rupees per month. There are large numbers (40%) of elderly people who falls on income between Rs. 2000 – Rs. 10000. The data also says that only 2 % of people have the income more than 25000 rupees per month.

Survey data highlights that a large portion of the income comes from self-employment as many of the young elderly people mostly at the age of 60-70. Around 57% of income generated from self-employment. 23% of the people depend on retirement pension for their daily requirements and 20% of old age pension. A large number of people (43%) depend on retirement pension and old age pension because of their health problem and lack of alternative job options at that particular age. The alternative sources of income are very less to illiterate and unskilled elderly people. During interaction with some of the people in slum areas, it is found that their major source of income comes from their family member and very less from self-employment. Many times they have to lay down their hands before their children meet their daily requirements.

**Table 2:** Socio-Demographic Details of Population

| Variables | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 66 | 66.0 |
| | Female | 34 | 34.0 |
| Age group | 60-65 | 41 | 41.0 |
| | 66-70 | 32 | 32.0 |
| | 71-75 | 19 | 19.0 |
| | 76-80 | 8 | 8.0 |
| Monthly Income (In Rupees) | Below 2000 | 24 | 24.0 |
| | 2000- 5000 | 22 | 22.0 |
| | 5000- 10000 | 18 | 18.0 |
| | 10000-25000 | 34 | 34.0 |
| | Above 25000 | 2 | 2.0 |
| Sources of income | Self-employment | 57 | 57.0 |
| | Retirement pension | 23 | 23.0 |
| | Old age pension | 20 | 20.0 |

## Reasons of Low level of Social Participation

It was observed that the majority of older persons reportedly complaining about isolation & loneliness in old age. The study shows that they are facing depression due to isolation & loneliness. Older person facing loneliness in Delhi & NCR was found in poor health condition because of less interaction with people. Due to isolation in old age, many older persons were found feeling unsecured in their lives. The table 3 below shows various reasons of the low level of participation and social inactiveness of elder people in Delhi. Survey results show that about 61% of elderly people say that they feel isolated at home and by their family members. In nuclear families, older persons said that they are living in isolation because they do not get the adequate company of their family members. The data says that the central reason of social inactiveness of elderly is due to a health problem (42%) followed by economic insufficiency (21%) and the behavior of the family members.

**Table 3:** Reason for Social Participation

| Variables | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Isolation | By family members | 61 | 61.0 |
| | Friends | 19 | 19.0 |
| | Community members | 10 | 10.0 |
| | At workplace | 10 | 10.0 |
| Reasons of Socially Inactive | Psychological problems | 7 | 7.0 |
| | Transportation | 6 | 6.0 |
| | Behaviour of family | 15 | 15.0 |
| | Low self-esteem | 9 | 9.0 |
| | Health problems | 42 | 42.0 |
| | Economic problems | 21 | 21.0 |

**Issues of Transportation**

The study reveals that the majority of the elderly unfriendly to transportation. The unfriendliness is mainly because of negligence on the part of the government to involve elderly people in the planning process on one hand and the lack of cooperation and integration of needs and the growing social marginalization of elderly people in the society on the other hand. The study found that, poor and middle-class elderly persons are frequent users of public transport in Delhi. Most of the participants said that they need regular access to transport services with elderly friendly accessibility. Although public transport services are available at certain Splace, they are hardly accessible to elderly, disabilities and people with bad health conditions. The figure 1 shows that bus, own vehicle, taxi, auto rickshaw and metro are the most used public transport for the elderly people across different income groups. The study reveals that the majority of them use the bus (59%) in their day to day life to travel different places across the city. A significant percentage of people also use an auto rickshaw (15%) and the taxi (12%) to reach their destination. People have hardly had their own vehicles (8%) and elderly don't prefer to travel through metro (6%) which is extremely crowded.

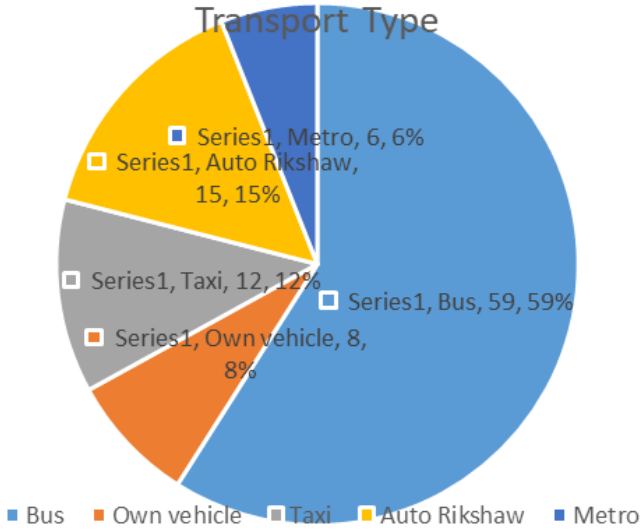



**Fig 1:** Transport type

Metro train in Delhi has reserved seats for elderly like the public buses. Often people occupied the seats reserved for elderly persons. The study also shows that elderly people preferred to travel by metro because of frequent accessibility, but many times they face difficulty to get into the train because of heavy rush. One of the old women's have summarized that it is hard to find any place to sit in the bus stand. There are no proper sitting arrangement, no benches and no sheds for the elderly people.

Most of the elderly people do not want to drive their own vehicles because of increasing indiscipline of young road users, careless driving, fast-moving, traffic violation, and wrong parking. There was no concept of special parking facilities for older persons. They do not feel safe to use their own vehicles, therefore, depended on family members or paid drivers to go out.

**Various Financial issues faced by Elderly**

The table 5 indicates that 62% of elderly people feel that their present income is not very well to meet their daily requirements and other necessaries. 10% people say that they have enough earnings and live without major problems. Around 16% say that it's adequate and 11% say it's totally inadequate to meet their monthly expenditure. They also advocated that particularly the age groups of 70-80, there is no alternative income generation work for them at this age even if they want to do.

**Table 4:** Various Financial issues faced by Elderly

| Variables | Responses | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction of Needs with Current Income | Very well | 11 | 11.0 |
| | Adequately | 16 | 16.0 |
| | Not very well | 62 | 62.0 |
| | Totally Inadequately | 11 | 11.0 |
| Income Spending Pattern | Health Care | 60 | 60.0 |
| | Food | 21 | 21.0 |
| | Transportation | 10 | 10.0 |
| | Daily basic needs | 9 | 9.0 |
| Having Debt from other people | Yes | 61 | 61.0 |
| | No | 39 | 39.0 |

**Satisfaction of Needs with Current Income**

It can be concluded from the study that there is a significant relationship between the level of current income and satisfaction of needs. Those elderly person falls under the income level between 2000-5000 are hardly able to fulfill their basic needs with their current income. The table shows that 79.2% of the elderly population in Delhi unable to fulfill their basic needs with income level (below 2000) and 72% between (2000-5000). Only 5.6% say they are adequately fulfilling their needs. In aggregate it can be said that out of a total population studied, only 16 percent of elderly persons satisfied with their current income and majority of them (62%) say not very well to satisfy their basic needs and requirements. Elderly persons in the age group of 60-70 are much more active in income earning activities than the age group of 80+.

**Findings**

The young generation in contemporary society is completely influenced by the modern values and somehow ignored the traditional values, family structure and the role of elders in society. The changing behavior and attitude of young generation contribute to the vulnerability of older people, which again indicates the decline of traditional authority, respect for elderly people and self-dignity. Many times the generational gap leads to exploitation and abuses of elderly mass. The study also indicates that elderly people in nuclear family/ small families are facing different kinds of difficulties in their everyday life. The majority of an elderly person expressed that the main cause of their isolation and loneliness is due to less interaction with family and societal members. 60% of age old people expressed that they feel isolated at home and by their family members. The study also revealed that in nuclear family elderly do not get adequate help and accompany from the family member at the time of requirements. Most of the elderly people said that they are unable to pay for their daily needs and many times face difficulty paying for medicine, utilities, and food. They manage the situation by cutting down their major purchases and travelling. The study also revealed that elderly people have fewer decisions to make when it comes to an economic decision and spending pattern because their economic activities fixed to their daily requirements in related to their income. Elderly persons in the age group of 60-70 are much more active in income earning activities than the age group of 80+. The study shows that access to public transport is a crucial issue for elderly people. Many elderly said there are greater difficulties to use public transport frequently. The existing transportation facilities are not elderly friendly

**Conclusion**

It is largely accepted by all sections of the people that the built environment in Delhi-NCR is unfriendly and hostile for the elder population, especially for those who are struggling for their basic needs and meet their requirements. Since there is a growing elderly population in Delhi, they need to be organized so that they can play a crucial role in the economy and acknowledged their contribution and interests by the society at large. Many times they merely remain as a voter of democracy and hardly paid any attention to the leaders. The majority of elderly is staying with joint families and they find it difficult to stay away from their family members or alone. Nowadays the trend of living in isolation or loneliness is emerging and it is happening rapidly in a city like Delhi. In a changing environment, elderly face different kinds of discrimination, deprivation, and mistreatment by the society members. Protection and preservation of human rights of the elderly population should be a priority for all the responsible citizens of the city and the country at large. Building awareness among the young generations regarding the betterment of elderly people is an uphill task for the young people of the city. The policies and programs for the elderly are more cosmetic than effective. In a broader sense, society at large should inculcate the sense of responsibility to facilitate all the requirements and protect the rights and dignity of the elderly population.

**Recommendations**

Considering the changing society, aged people should not be looked upon as a burden rather than an active agent of progress in society. We must take care and provide social security to the elderly population for their healthy and prosperous life (Government of India, 2012) [5]. It can be said from the study that, there is an urgent need for all aspects of care for the elderly people. They need care in the area of health, transport, finance, proper home and social status. Older women should be taken proper care and treatment because their numbers are likely to increase in the future who are likely to be unprepared to handle the situation. The planners and policy makers should keep in mind the special requirements of elderly people while developing the modern services. Accessible to public place especially community centre, public offices, hospitals, bus stand, public parks, etc. should be designed as per the convenience of elderly people. Social security schemes for the elderly should be given high priority by the concerned authority. Old age schemes like widow pension, old age pension, agricultural pension, etc. have to improve considerably.

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