

Psychological Well-being in Older Person in India: The Role of Family

Introduction

India is currently experiencing a rapid demographic transition, with its population of older adults growing at a faster rate than the overall population due to declining fertility rates, increasing life expectancy, and urbanization. These demographic shifts have resulted in significant changes in family structures, as more older persons are living alone or in nuclear families with the dissimulation of traditional joint family, separated from their children who migrate for employment or education. This research focuses on the psychological well-being of older adults in India, examining how family dynamics, household composition, and socio-economic factors influence their mental health. The study specifically explores the prevalence of depression and life satisfaction among individuals aged 60 and above.

Data and Methodology

The study utilizes data from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) Wave 1 (2017–2018). The primary outcome variables are depression and life satisfaction.

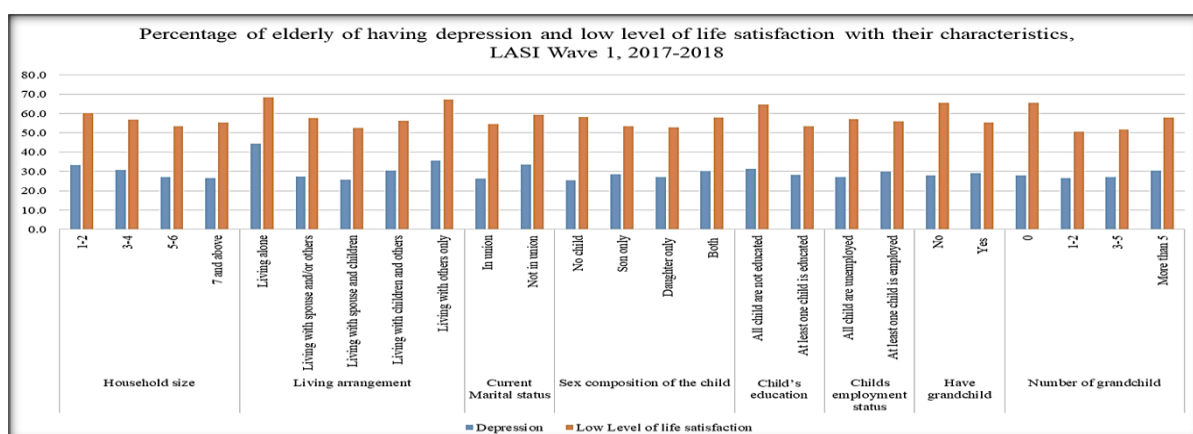
The explanatory variables include household size, living arrangements, marital status, children's education and employment status, and the presence of grandchildren taken as family related variables. Statistical analyses include bivariate and multivariate regression models to examine the association between family characteristics and mental health outcomes.

Results and Findings

The results indicate significant variations in mental health outcomes based on household size, and living arrangements. Household size appears to play a protective role, as those living in larger households (5-6 members) have lower rates of depression (27.2%) and life dissatisfaction (53.4%) compared to those in smaller households. The data also show that elderly individuals living alone face the highest levels of psychological distress, with 44.3% reporting depression and 68.3% expressing low life satisfaction (Figure 1).

Living arrangements and family structure significantly influence mental well-being. Co-residence with a spouse and children is associated with the lowest depression and life dissatisfaction rates. The presence of educated children further reduces depression risks, with those having at least one educated child showing lower depression rates (28.1%) than those whose children are uneducated (31.3%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of elderly of having depression and low level of life satisfaction with their family characteristics, LASI Wave 1, 2017-2018



Source: Calculated from the LASI Wave-1 Data, 2017-2018

The study's findings highlight the importance of family support, particularly in the context of changing household dynamics in India. Larger household sizes, co-residence with family members, and the presence of educated children emerge as significant protective factors against depression and low life satisfaction. Conversely, elderly individuals living alone, especially women and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are at a greater risk of mental health issues.

Table 2: Unadjusted and adjusted odds ratio, showing the association of depression among older person with their characteristics, LASI Wave1, 2017-2018

Background characteristics	Unadjusted	Adjusted
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
Household size		
1-2 [®]		
3-4	0.80*** (0.74 0.86)	0.93* (0.84 1.04)
5-6	0.74*** (0.70 0.79)	0.83*** (0.74 0.92)
7 and above	0.75*** (0.70 0.81)	0.81*** (0.72 0.90)
Living arrangement		
Living alone [®]		
Living with spouse and/or others	0.51*** (0.46 0.57)	0.84* (0.64 1.08)
Living with spouse and children	0.44*** (0.40 0.49)	0.88* (0.66 1.16)
Living with children and others	0.61*** (0.54 0.68)	0.72*** (0.62 0.83)
Living with others only	0.63*** (0.55 0.73)	0.72*** (0.61 0.85)
Current Marital status		
In union[®]		
Not in union	1.44*** (1.37 1.51)	1.45*** (1.15 1.84)

Sex composition of the child/ren		
No child [®]		
Son only	1.11** (1.01 1.23)	1.12* (0.98 1.28)
Daughter only	1.01 (0.92 1.10)	1.07* (0.95 1.21)
Both	1.17*** (1.08 1.26)	1.13** (1.00 1.29)
Child/ren's education		
All child are not educated [®]		
At least one child is educated	1.03* (0.98 1.09)	0.92** (0.85 0.99)
Child/ren's employment status		
All child are unemployed [®]		
At least one child is employed	1.16*** (1.10 1.11)	0.95* (0.89 1.02)
Have grandchild/ren		
No [®]		
Yes	1.57*** (1.45 1.70)	0.83 (0.36 1.90)
Number of grandchild/ren		
0 [®]		
1-2	1.51*** (1.36 1.67)	1.29 (0.56 2.94)
3-5	1.46*** (1.33 1.60)	1.13 (0.50 2.58)
More than 5	1.64*** (1.51 1.78)	1.13 (0.49 2.56)

Source: Calculated from the LASI Wave-1 Data, 2017-2018; [®]= reference category, OR= Odds Ratio, CI= Confidence interval; ***, **, * = 1%, 5%, and 10% level of significance, respectively

Table 3: Unadjusted and adjusted odds ratio, showing the association of low level of life satisfaction among older person with their characteristics, LASI Wave1, 2017-2018

Background characteristics	Unadjusted	Adjusted
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
Household size		
1-2 [®]		
3-4	1.02 (0.95 1.09)	1.05* (0.95 1.15)
5-6	0.89*** (0.84 0.95)	0.91** (0.82 1.00)
7 and above	0.92** (0.86 0.98)	0.85*** (0.77 0.95)
Living arrangement		
Living alone [®]		
Living with spouse and/or others	0.66*** (0.59 0.74)	0.83* (0.66 1.05)
Living with spouse and children	0.59*** (0.53 0.66)	0.77** (0.60 0.99)
Living with children and others	0.70*** (0.63 0.79)	0.75*** (0.65 0.86)

Living with others only	0.95 (0.83 1.10)	0.89* (0.76 1.05)
Current Marital status		
In union [®]		
Not in union	1.27*** (1.12 1.33)	1.12* (0.91 1.38)
Sex composition of the child/ren		
No child [®]		
Son only	0.56*** (0.51 0.61)	1.22*** (1.07 1.38)
Daughter only	0.56*** (0.52 0.60)	1.31*** (1.17 1.46)
Both	0.63*** (0.58 0.67)	1.31*** (1.17 1.48)
Child/ren's education		
All child are not educated [®]		
At least one child is educated	0.56*** (0.53 0.59)	0.81*** (0.75 0.87)
Child/ren's employment status		
All child are unemployed [®]		
At least one child is employed	0.74*** (0.71 0.77)	0.87*** (0.82 0.93)
Have grandchild/ren		
No [®]		
Yes	0.49*** (0.45 0.52)	1.18 (0.55 2.54)
Number of grandchild/ren		
0 [®]		
1-2	0.46*** (0.42 0.50)	0.66* (0.31 1.42)
3-5	0.45*** (0.41 0.48)	0.58* (0.27 1.25)
More than 5	0.51*** (0.48 0.55)	0.56* (0.26 1.20)

Source: Calculated from the LASI Wave-1 Data, 2017-2018; [®]= reference category, OR= Odds Ratio, CI= Confidence interval; ***, **, * = 1%, 5%, and 10% level of significance, respectively

India's aging population faces significant challenges in maintaining mental well-being, especially as family structures evolve. This study underscores the critical role of family dynamics, household size, and socio-economic factors in determining the mental health of older adults. Policymakers must prioritize social support systems, economic security, and educational opportunities to ensure the psychological well-being of India's elderly population. The findings also suggest that interventions targeting the most vulnerable groups, such as women, the poor, and those living alone, are essential for reducing depression and enhancing life satisfaction among older adults.