



## Stress Level among Senior Citizens Staying at Old Age Homes in Relation to Demographic Profiles

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**Abstract:** Stress is a major concern for researchers because of its negative impacts on human body and human mind. The effect of stress on people varies especially based on the demographic profiles. In this study, the stress levels of senior citizens who are staying in old age homes are considered. The main purpose of the study is to compare the stress levels of senior citizens based on their demographic characters. In this study, 220 senior citizens from the old age homes of Karnataka and Kerala; aged between 60-90 years are studied. Stratified random sampling method is used to select the sample for the study. Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon Cohen, 1994) was modified standardised and used to measure the stress levels of the senior citizens. The result showed that there are significant differences on the stress level based on age, education, religion and profession. The difference is not significant on the basis of gender, marital status and the type of family.

**Key Words:** Stress Level, Senior Citizens, Old age homes, Demographic Profiles

### Introduction

The number of senior citizens is increasing every year, and the United Nations Population Fund and Help Age India reported that India had 90 million elderly people in 2011, and the number is expected to grow to 173 million by 2026. Of the 90 million seniors, 30 million are living alone, and 90 percent work for their livelihood. Presently, many parents are living alone or they are living in different old-age homes. Elder care is affected by the migration of rural people to urban areas for work and the role change of women from housewives to professionals (Randel, German & Ewing, 2017). These situations finally lead to sending their parents to the old age home. The senior citizens who lead a decent life with their families could not afford these changes, which created a lot of stress, which in turn is affecting their health.

Stress is a psychological state that develops when an individual is confronted with situations that exhaust or exceed his or her perceived internal and external resources (Mirela, 2009). Stress normally occurs when there are changes in people's lives or situations. Similarly, senior citizens feel the change and stress when they are put into old-age homes. Stress creates a lot of emotional and physical issues for senior citizens. Therefore, the present study focuses on the stress level of people staying in old age homes with respect to their demographic profiles.

### **Stress and demographic profiles**

In this modern world, stress is experienced by everyone. Even though many of the studies discussed about the importance of moderate stress (Hupbach & Fieman, 2012; Parfitt, Barbosa, Campos, Koth, & Barros, 2012; Wyon, Andersen, & Lundqvist, 1979; Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992), the effect of high stress levels on people is troublesome, especially because it may create physiological problems, physiological difficulties, and adverse behavioural reactions (Mirela, 2009). The intensity of stress for different people varies due to their demographic characteristics. Stress levels vary based on gender. A study conducted by Campbell, Svenson, & Jarvis (1992) in Canada found that the level of stress is higher for women than men. Dahlin and Runeson (2005)'s also supported the higher stress level of women medical students compared to male students.

The stress level is found to be lower for people of a certain age. Aldwin, Sutton, Chiara, and Spiro (1996) identified that the stress level is higher for persons in the age group of 65–74 compared to the age group of 75 and above. Health-related stress is also found to be higher for the elderly compared to the middle-aged (Martin, Grünendahl, & Martin, 2001), but the scenario is different for heart attack patients, where the perceived stress level with regard to their age was not significant (Jaan, Khan, Bashiri, & Ahmad, 2016).

Adjustment issues with the new environment create a lot of stress. One such example is the research conducted by Dahlin and Runeson (2005), where they studied the stress levels of first- and second year medical students. The results showed that first year students have more stress due to the adjustment problems with the new environment.

The stress levels of heart attack patients are found to be different for people living in nuclear and joint families (Jaan et al., 2016). Many of these studies focused on different levels of people and compared their stress levels, but senior citizens who are staying in old age homes are hardly explored. Therefore, this study explores the stress level of senior citizens.

## **Need And Rationale**

The Senior citizens in old age homes are often neglected by the family members and relatives thus it leads to lot of stress in their daily living. Therefore, the present study aims to find out their stress levels and to compare them with their age, educational qualifications, profession, religion, gender, marital status and the type of family so that various interventions and programmes can be arranged to help them reduce their stress levels when they are in the old age homes. The study will help the caregivers to adapt new methods based on the findings to reduce the stress of the elderly in the old age homes.

## **Objectives**

1. To study the stress level of the senior citizens in the old age homes.
2. To study the stress levels of senior citizens with respect to the following variables age, educational qualification, profession, religion, gender, marital status and type of family of Senior Citizens in the old age homes.

## **Hypotheses**

H1: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to their age.

H2: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to their educational qualifications.

H3: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to their Profession.

H4: There is significant difference in stress level of senior citizens with respect to their religion.

H5: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to their gender.

H6: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to their marital status.

H7: There is significant difference in stress levels of senior citizens with respect to the type of family.

## **Methodology**

The Quantitative study focused on 220 senior citizens from different old-age homes in Karnataka and Kerala. The respondents, aged between 60 to 90 years, were taken for the study. A convenient sampling method was used for selecting the orphanage. The data was collected personally from each orphanage after obtaining consent from the old-age home authorities and the respondents.

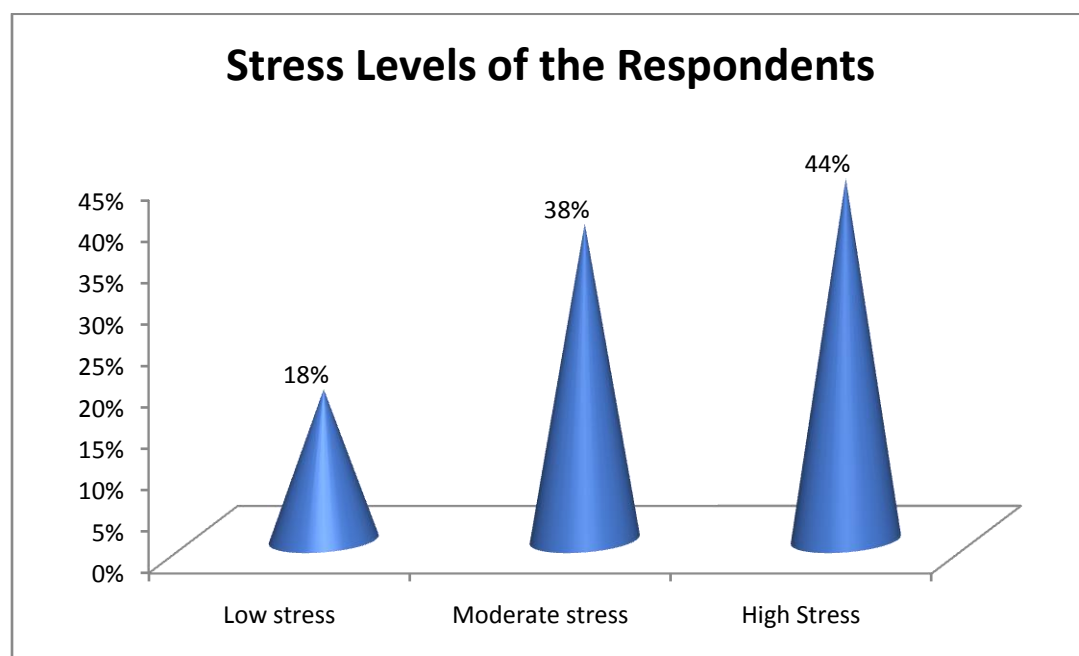
The Perceived Stress Scale (Sheldon Cohen, 1994) was modified standardised and was used to measure the stress levels of the senior citizens. There were 10 questions relating to the stress level felt by each respondent over the last month. Demographic details were also collected to compare the stress level based on demographic details.

Descriptive statistics were used for the basic analysis. The data was normally distributed, and one-way ANOVA and t-tests were used for comparing the stress level and the demographic characteristics.

## Results and Discussion

The stress level of people staying in old age home is given below.

**Diagram No.1 Stress Level of senior citizens.**



The diagram (fig.1) shows about the stress level of the senior citizens in the old age homes. Among the senior citizens, majority (44%) of them have high stress level, 38% of them have moderate stress level and 18% of the senior citizens have low stress level.

**Table No.1 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Age**

Age category	N	Mean	SD	F	<i>p</i>
60-69	100	25.23	7.952	6.851	.001
70-79	87	20.61	9.753		

80-89	33	22.42	8.474
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The above table show that there is a significant difference between age category across stress scores ( $F=6.851$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). It was observed that age category 60-69 has highest stress score ( $M=25.23$ ,  $S.D=7.952$ ) compared to 70-79 ( $M=20.61$ ,  $S.D=9.753$ ) age group and 80-89 ( $M=20.61$ ,  $S.D=8.474$ ) age group. The results proved the hypothesis (H1) that there is a significant difference between the stress levels among senior citizens with respect to their age.

**Table No.2 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Educational Qualifications**

Educational Qualification	N	Mean	Std.	F	P
			Deviation		
No Education	45	25.56	8.341	9.962	.000
Below 10 <sup>th</sup>	92	25.26	6.845		
SSLC	22	23.23	9.370		
Predegree	20	22.70	9.979		
Undergraduate	24	17.67	8.928		
Above Degree	17	12.88	7.079		
Total	220	23.10	8.780		

The table indicates that there is a significant difference in the stress level with regards to the educational qualification of the senior citizens. The F value ( $F=9.962$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) shows that the difference is significant based on the educational qualification of the respondents. Descriptive statistics shows that the stress level is more for people who have No Education ( $M=25.56$ ,  $S.D=8.341$ ) and below 10<sup>th</sup> ( $M=25.26$ ,  $S.D=6.845$ ). The stress level is less for the respondents who have high educational qualification. That means higher the education lowers the stress level.

**Table No.3 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Profession**

Profession	N	Mean	Std.	F	P
			Deviation		
Organized	50	17.98	8.902	14.356	.000
Unorganized	111	23.68	8.257		
No Job	59	26.36	7.799		
Total	220	23.10	8.780		

The table number 3 indicates the fact that the stress level and profession that the senior citizens were having before entering to the old age home has got relevance. There was a significant difference ( $F=14.356$ ,  $p<.05$ ) between those had no job and those who had job in organized or unorganized sector. The mean and standard deviation of people who had no job ( $M=26.36$ ,  $S.D=7.799$ ), those who work in the unorganized job sectors ( $M=23.68$ ,  $S.D=8.257$ ) and those who work in organized sector ( $M=17.98$ ,  $S.D=8.902$ ) clearly demark the difference in stress level. This may be due to the perceptual difference in the attitude based on the culture what they are exposed to.

**Table No.4 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Religion**

Religion	N	Mean	Std.		F	P
			Mean	Deviation		
Hindu	50	25.02	8.309		2.866	.038
Muslim	7	24.57	8.059			
Christian	160	22.66	8.828			
Other Religion	3	11.33	6.028			
Total	220	23.10	8.780			

There was a significant difference between religion across stress scores ( $F=2.866$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). It was observed that Hindus had the highest stress scores ( $M=25.02$ ,  $S.D=8.309$ ) compared to Muslims ( $M=24.57$ ,  $S.D=8.059$ ), Christians ( $M=22.66$ ,  $S.D=8.828$ ), other religions ( $M=11.33$ ,  $S.D=6.028$ ).

**Table No.5 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Gender**

Gender	N	Mean	Std.		t	Df	P
			Mean	Deviation			
STRESS Male	62	23.44	8.756		.354	218	.723
Female	158	22.97	8.814				

There was no significant difference observed between male ( $t=0.354$ ,  $p>.05$ ) and female respondents. The mean and standard deviation values of male ( $M=23.44$ ,  $S.D=8.756$ ) and female ( $M=22.97$ ,  $S.D=8.814$ ) respondents on their stress level shows that the stress level is slightly higher for male senior citizens, but the difference is not significant.

**Table No.6 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Marital Status**

	Marital		Std.		t	Df	P
	Status	N	Mean	Deviation			
STRESS	Single	69	24.59	9.394	1.714	218	.088
	Married	151	22.42	8.430			

The table (6) indicates that the stress level ( $t=1.714$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) is not significantly different based on their marital status. The results shows the mean and standard deviation vales of stress levels of single ( $M=24.59$ ,  $S.D=9.394$ ) and married senior citizens ( $M=22.42$ ,  $S.D=8.430$ ).

**Table No.7 Comparison of Stress Level of Senior Citizens with Respect to Type of Family**

	Family type		Std.		t	Df	P
		N	Mean	Deviation			
STRESS	Nuclear	190	22.71	8.866	-1.662	218	.098
	Joint Family	30	25.57	7.916			

The table (7) indicates that the stress level ( $t=-1.66$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) is not significantly different based on the type of family. The results shows the mean and standard deviation vales of stress levels of nuclear family ( $M=22.71$ ,  $S.D=8.866$ ) and joint family ( $M=25.57$ ,  $S.D=7.916$ ).

## Discussion

The present study reveals that the stress level of people living in old-age homes is high (44% high stress, 38% moderate stress). Demographic factors have an influence on the stress level of senior citizens, especially factors like age, educational qualification, profession, and religion. In this study, it was observed that senior citizens who belong to the age category 60-69 have the highest stress score compared to the other age groups. This may be due to the initial adjustment problems of the new people who come to the old-age home. On the other hand, other members who are already settled down in an old-age home after their retirement. They are worried more about their health. The recency effect can be a reason for the stress level of people because of recent life events such as retirement, divorce, and other family problems (Aldwin, Sutton, Chiara, & Spiro, 1996), which may be troubling them more.

The present study also highlights that there is a significant difference in the stress level and educational qualifications of senior citizens. The stress level is high for people who have less educational

qualifications. As their educational level increases, the views they have on parenting are found to be different. They were more open to understanding the changes in the new generation. Thus, education plays an important role in the lives of senior citizens living in old-age homes. The study conducted among Asian Americans also highlighted the importance of educational qualifications for psychological distress (Hang & Hong, 2013). The importance of education is also highlighted in a study conducted among heart attack patients that found that illiterates had more stress ( $M = 30.1273$ ) and literates had less stress comparatively ( $M = 26.6222$ ) (Jaanet et al., 2016).

Another important fact is that there was a significant difference between those who had no job and those who had jobs in the organised or unorganised sector. Thus, those who have systematised their lives are better able to manage stressful moments in their life than those who do not have jobs or have unorganised jobs. According to Tiwary and Gangopadhyay (2011), the unorganised sectors have a high risk of health and danger, so those who work there have high stress. Those who work in the unorganised sectors are mostly illiterate and poor, so they are easily manipulated.

Another important finding was that there was a significant difference between different religions with respect to stress. It was observed that Hindus had the highest stress scores compared to other religions. The people who have felt the least stress are Christians. A study conducted among Catholic teachers revealed the fact that religious practises have a greater impact on sources of stress and job satisfaction (Chen & Koenig, 2006). Thus, religion and its practises might have some impact on reducing stress levels.

The stress levels of male and female senior citizens staying in an old age home show no significant difference in their stress level. The result does not support many of the previous research findings. Most of the studies mentioned that women have more stress than men (Campbell et al., 1992; Dahlin & Runeson, 2005). Stress feelings may be high for young women as compared to old women; this may be because, as they grow in age, they become more and more courageous to face the challenges in life due to their life experiences.

There was no significant difference observed between the single and married senior citizens in their stress scores. A study conducted among police officers in Pakistan revealed that married people exhibited a higher stress level than the unmarried (Husain & Sajjad, 2012). The married and unmarried working women were studied in Hyderabad, and the results showed that the married women had higher stress levels compared to the unmarried women due to various other responsibilities (Praveen, 2009). The senior citizens do not show any variance in the stress level between married and single; this may be due to over acquaintance in the old age home.



Another important fact is that there was no significant difference observed between senior citizens who come from nuclear families and joint families. Once they are in an old age home, there is no difference in their stress level, whether they are in a nuclear family or a joint family.

### **Implication of the study and future scope of study**

The study shows that the stress level of senior citizens is high or moderate. The importance of including stress coping mechanisms such as meditation, yoga, other exercises in their daily routine is very much needed to improve the stress level of senior citizens. The study can give insight to the government officials about the need for implementing certain policies for the welfare of people staying in old age homes.

### **Conclusion**

The senior citizens in the old age homes suffer from high and moderate stress and thus coping strategies to stress have to be implemented to improve their living conditions in the old age homes. The result further showed that there are significant differences on the stress level based on age, education, religion and profession, but the difference is not significant on the basis of gender, marital status and the type of family.

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