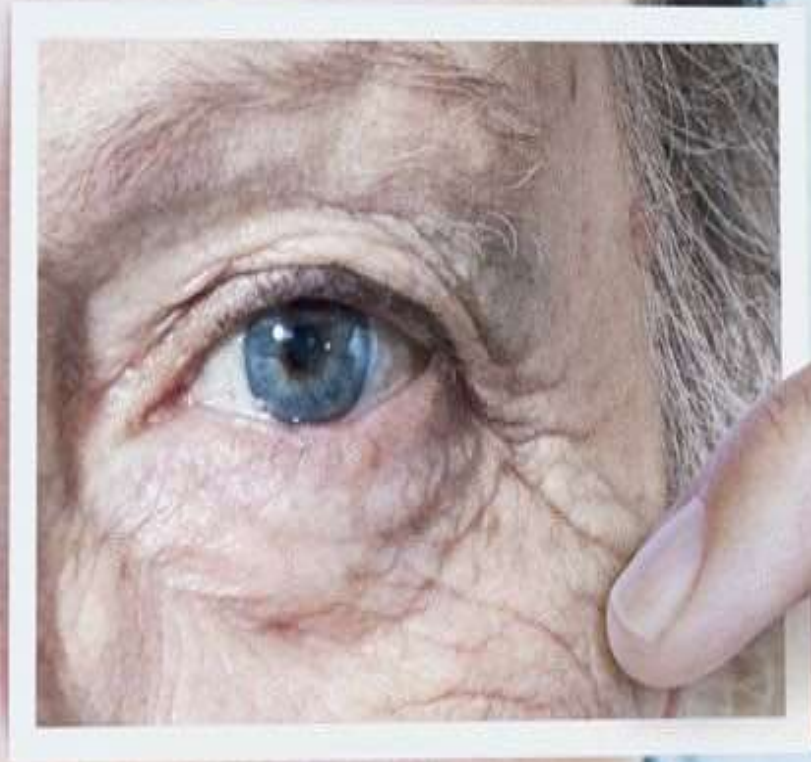


UNIT:1

Gerontological Social Work



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UNIT 1

Concept of old age, Meaning and Definition of Ageing, Theories of ageing: Biological, Social & psychological - Problems of ageing: Physical, Psychological, Economic and Social Problems, Gerontological Social Work.

Ageing

- Ageing is the process of **becoming older**.
- In humans, aging represents the accumulation of changes in a human being over time and can encompass **physical, psychological, and social changes**.



- People worldwide are living longer. Today most people can expect to live into their sixties and beyond. Every country in the world is experiencing growth in the population of **older persons**.
- India's elderly population (aged 60 and above) is projected to touch 194 million in 2031 from 138 million in 2021, a 41 per cent increase over a decade, according to the National Statistical Office (NSO)'s Elderly in India 2021 report.
- Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double, from **12% to 22%**.
- While this shift in distribution of a country's population towards older ages – known as **population ageing** – started in high-income countries (for example in Japan 30% of the population is already over 60 years old), it is now low- and middle-income countries that are experiencing the greatest change. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population over 60 years will live in low- and middle-income countries.



Health of Older Persons



- Older age is also characterized by the emergence of several complex health states commonly called geriatric syndromes. They are often the consequence of multiple underlying factors and include **urinary incontinence, falls, delirium and pressure ulcers**.
- If people can experience these extra years of life in good health and if they live in a **supportive environment**, their ability to do the things they value will be little different from that of a younger person.
- If these added years are dominated by **declines in physical and mental capacity**, the implications for older people and for society are more negative.

- Although some of the variations in older people's health are genetic, most is due to people's **physical and social environments** – including their **homes, neighborhoods, and communities**, as well as their **personal characteristics** – such as **their sex, or socioeconomic status**. The environments that people live in as children – or even as developing fetuses – combined with their personal characteristics, have long-term effects on how they age.
- **Physical and social environments** can affect health directly or through barriers that affect opportunities, decisions and health behaviour. **Maintaining healthy behaviours throughout life, particularly eating a balanced diet, engaging in regular physical activity and consume tobacco** , all contribute to reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases, improving physical and mental capacity and delaying care dependency.
- **Supportive physical and social environments** also enable people to do what is important to them, despite losses in capacity. **The availability of safe and accessible public buildings and transport, and places** that are easy to walk around, are examples of supportive environments.



PROBLEMS FACED BY ELDERLY

Physiological
problems

Psychological
problems

Social problems

Emotional problems

Health problems

Finance

Loneliness

Loss of respect and
dignity

Problem of mobility

Problem of elder
abuse and crime

BASIC NEEDS

INDEPENDENCE FROM
WANTS

CARE

SELF FULFILLMENT

PARTICIPATION, SOCIAL AND
CIVIC NEEDS

DIGNITY

SECURITY

Physical Health Issues

- **Chronic Diseases:** Conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and osteoporosis are prevalent among the elderly.
- **Mobility Limitations:** Aging can lead to decreased strength, flexibility, and balance, increasing the risk of falls and fractures.
- **Sensory Impairments:** Hearing loss, vision impairments, and reduced taste and smell are common as people age, which can affect communication and daily functioning.
- **Pain and Discomfort:** Chronic pain, often from conditions like arthritis, can impact the quality of life, limiting mobility and social interactions.



Mental Health Issues

- **Cognitive Decline:** Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other forms of cognitive impairment are prevalent among the elderly, affecting memory, decision-making, and independence.
- **Depression and Anxiety:** Many elderly people experience depression or anxiety due to isolation, loss of loved ones, declining health, or financial insecurity.
- **Loneliness and Social Isolation:** With retirement, death of peers or family members, and limited mobility, elderly individuals can become socially isolated, leading to emotional distress.



Financial Insecurity

- **Retirement Income:** Fixed pensions or retirement savings may not be sufficient to meet the needs of the elderly, especially in cases of unexpected medical costs or inflation.
- **Limited Employment Opportunities:** Many elderly individuals find it difficult to secure employment due to age discrimination or physical limitations.
- **Rising Healthcare Costs:** Medical expenses often increase with age, especially for those with chronic conditions or disabilities.

Access to Healthcare and Treatment

- **Limited Access to Care:** The elderly may have difficulty accessing healthcare services due to transportation issues, lack of awareness, or geographical barriers.
- **Inadequate Geriatric Care:** Specialized care for elderly people with disabilities or complex health needs may be scarce, leading to unmet healthcare needs.
- **Medication Management:** Managing multiple medications for chronic conditions can be challenging, leading to the risk of medication errors.





Living Arrangements and Safety Concerns

- **Inadequate Housing:** Many elderly individuals live in homes that are not suited to their needs, such as those with stairs, narrow doorways, or unsafe bathroom facilities.
- **Elder Abuse:** Vulnerable elderly individuals may experience physical, emotional, or financial abuse, often by caregivers, family members, or even strangers.
- **Difficulty with Daily Activities:** Tasks such as cooking, cleaning, personal care, and transportation can become overwhelming, leading to a loss of independence.

Legal and Ethical Issues

- **Guardianship and Legal Rights:** In cases of cognitive decline, elderly individuals may lose the ability to make decisions, leading to challenges around guardianship and decision-making.
- **Wills and Estates:** Lack of proper planning for inheritance, wills, and estates can lead to conflicts among family members and a loss of control over personal assets.



Social Stigma and Ageism

- **Discrimination:** Many elderly individuals face ageism, where their abilities, worth, and potential are undervalued simply due to their age.
- **Marginalization:** Older adults may be excluded from social, cultural, or economic activities, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and mental health.

Caregiver Dependency

- **Need for Caregiving:** Many elderly individuals require caregiving support due to physical or cognitive limitations. The quality of care can vary, and some may face neglect or poor treatment.
- **Caregiver Burden:** Those who take on caregiving roles often experience stress, burnout, and physical and emotional exhaustion, which can lead to their own health problems.

End-of-Life Issues

- **Loss of Loved Ones:** The death of close family members and friends is a common experience for the elderly, contributing to grief and loneliness.
- **End-of-Life Decisions:** Elderly individuals may struggle with decisions about life-sustaining treatments, palliative care, and the desire to maintain dignity and autonomy during the end-of-life process.
- **Addressing these issues** requires a combination of personal, social, healthcare, and policy-level interventions to support the elderly in maintaining a dignified, healthy, and fulfilling life.

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Questions

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Answers

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