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# A Brief Discussion On Old Age Adjustment

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## ABSTRACT

People enter into old age when they are nearing the end of their lives. Despite their desire to live a long life, the changes that occur during this age are unavoidable, unpleasant, undesired, and trouble-filled to the people. Changes in physiological, cognitive, and personality characteristics occur, just as they did earlier in life. Many individuals assume that intellectual developments are terrifying. Personality is another trait that isn't expected to stiffen with age, but recent study has shown that personality is changeable rather than rigid. Other life transitions, such as retirement, the death of a spouse, or a change in living circumstances, might be difficult to adjust to. They emphasise the exhilarating and adventurous spirit of youth at the time. These are the types of circumstances that make a person feel ineffective and socially alienated. However, if a person perceives these changes positively and sees aging as a positive aspect, age does not become a problem, even if the body begins to fail. Their positive outlook will equip them with the energy to live a joyful life despite their challenges. Problems happen at every stage of life, and we must face them head on in order to make healthy changes as we go.

**Keywords:** old age, adjustment

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

The aging process is a natural component of life. It is called the evening of life. It refers to ages that are approaching or above a human's life expectancy. It's an unavoidable, unpleasant, undesired, and trouble-filled stage of life. But it's worth noting that while everyone wants to live a long life, they don't want to grow old. It's paradoxical that, no matter how unpleasant old age is, it's unavoidable in life. Before leaving this earthly world, a man is required to go through the trials and joys of this age, as well as the other phases of life.

Older people have fewer regeneration capacities than younger people, making them more susceptible to disease, disorders, and illness. The reason for this is that their bodies are gradually degrading, and they experience greater difficulties, particularly with movement. Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens the bones and is becoming increasingly frequent as people become older.

Senescence is the organic process of aging, gerontology is the medical study of the aging process, and geriatrics is the study of disorders that affect the aged. Other social challenges that the elderly encounter include retirement, loneliness, and ageism.

Old age is not a specific biological stage, because it fluctuates culturally and historically, it Although many countries and communities perceive old age as happening anywhere from the mid-40s to the 70s, 60 or 65 is the age of eligibility for retirement and old-age social programmes in most contemporary western countries.

There are other terms for old people such as "senior citizens" or "elders". Elders are thought to be smart because they have accumulated a wealth of experience over the course of their lives. Many cultures hold elders in high regard and rely on them to pass down knowledge to the younger generations.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER:**

- To discuss the change in physiological functions, intellectual functions, personality and self-concept
- To discuss about various sources of adjustment difficulties in old age.
- To discuss the positive effects of viewing old age constructively.

## **3.0 DISCUSSION:**

### **3.01 To discuss the change in physiological functions, intellectual functions, personality and self-concept:**

Every stage of life has its own set of modifications that distinguish one period from the next. People go through a variety of changes from birth to death. Every stage of life brings about change, which cannot be avoided. Changes in earlier phases allow an individual to learn more about their surroundings, while in later stages, changes limit an individual's ability to undertake certain tasks.

The changes take place in some aspects such as physiological, intellectual and in personality that may be discussed below:

#### **3.01.01 Changes in Physiological Functions**

The aging process causes physiological changes in all organ systems. The output of the heart reduces. Arteriosclerosis develops as blood pressure rises.

With age, the brain loses weight and volume, and processes in the central nervous system slowdown, which starts in middle adulthood and accelerates in late life.

Reduced generation of B and T cells in the bone marrow and thymus, as well as lower activity of mature lymphocytes in secondary lymphoid organs, are all impacts of aging on the immune system. As a result, the old do not respond as well to the immunological challenge as the young.

Their physical appearance deteriorates as they grow older. Their skin is wrinkled and spots are visible. People get shorter as they get older, and muscular loss causes weight loss after the age of 60.

Color vision and depth perception frequently deteriorate as visual acuity declines with aging. Color distinction is reduced as the lens of the eye yellows with age. Hearing

loss normally occurs in middle age but does not become a significant problem until late life. Smell and taste can deteriorate, however in healthy older persons, the deterioration is minor. Changes in touch sensitivity are linked to aging, but for most elderly people, this is not an issue. In late adulthood, pain sensitivity declines.

### **3.01.02 Changes in Intellectual Functions:**

Many people worry that as they get older, their intellect would fade away, leaving them with cognitive disability and irrationality. However, intellectual loss is not a natural part of the aging process. The stereotype that the elderly lose general cognitive function or that such loss, when it occurs, is always disruptive is not supported by research. Although older persons learn more slowly and do worse on activities requiring imagination and memorization than younger adults, they may be deficient in specific mental tasks. They compensate for wisdom, specialist knowledge, and practical understanding gained via life experience.

Many senior citizens lament their inability to recall information as well as they formerly did. Memory impairments appear to be caused by short-term sensory storage issues rather than long-term memory processes. That is, older folks have a lot easier time remembering names and places from the past than they do learning and remembering new knowledge.

Practice and repetition may help minimize the decline of memory and other cognitive functions. Researchers have found that older adults can improve their scores on assorted tests of mental abilities with only a few hours of training. Working puzzles, having hobbies, learning to use a computer, and reading are a few examples of activities or approaches to learning that can make a difference in older adults' memory and cognitive functions.

Recent decades have witnessed older adults' growing interest in continuing their education. Although keeping up with a class of 20-year-olds may be a challenge, older adults can learn new information if it is presented, slowly, and over a while. Older adults also can enrich the learning process for others through the insight and wisdom they've gained from life experience. Through the knowledge and wisdom obtained from life experience, older folks can also increase the learning process for others.

Older folks who keep their minds active and fit continue to learn and grow, though at a slower pace than their younger counterparts. Patience and understanding (on both the elderly and their loved ones' parts), memory training, and continuing education are all vital for retaining mental capacities and quality of life in later life.

### **3.01.03 Changes in Personality and Self Concept:**

It's difficult to predict how aging will affect a person's personality. Over time, some people become less demanding and more forgiving. They might be happier with themselves and more accepting of others. They may also be less distrustful and protective, more open to new experiences, and more appreciative of beauty and kindness.

Other people's personalities alter as they get older, making providing care more difficult. Some senior citizens become reclusive, while others become more commanding and demanding. It's only natural for caregivers to become frustrated in these situations. It's natural for people to feel as if their greatest attempts to aid others are futile or unappreciated.

Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain how people's personalities change as they age. The early research revealed that as people grew older, their personalities got more inflexible and had limited development. More recent research, dating back to the 1970s, has demonstrated that personality traits are stable throughout adulthood and old age. As a result, personality would not become inflexible, but rather would continue as it had been since adulthood.

Current personality theories, on the other hand, see human growth as a multidimensional and multidirectional process involving the co-occurrence of gains, losses, and stability. According to this paradigm, humans have the ability to alter (plasticity) as well as maintain and regain adaption when confronted with limiting situations, which aids in the regular growth process throughout life. Thus, personality traits may be adjustable in old age, especially because persons at that age are more likely to be presented with stressful life circumstances that necessitate adaptation. Although many people can preserve their personality stability in typical life situations, it may be assumed that personality will change to adapt to life changes in more complex scenarios.

Depression is a common mood disorder in senior citizens. According to studies, one of the key triggering causes of depressive symptoms in old age is personality. The combination of low dominance and high neuroticism has been linked to the onset of depression in the elderly. High levels of extroversion and low levels of neuroticism, on the other hand, appear to be linked to a lower risk of mortality in old age. Other research has found that optimistic people have a better health status, live longer, have a more pleasant mood, and achieve more success than pessimistic people, who are more likely to acquire depression and have a worse health state.

Self-concept, like other aspects of personality, develops over time as a result of interacting biological, developmental, and social processes. It is learned through patterns of social interaction, and it evolves as children and adults gain new cognitive and intellectual capacities and face new social demands and procedures.

Because theory and research on self-concept among the elderly are lacking, it is difficult to explain self-development in later life. According to Suls and Mullen (1982), social comparisons are less significant at this stage due to the loss of comparison with others. As a result, temporal comparisons are common, particularly in reminiscing or life review (Butler 1963). Reminiscing about former events, roles, and identities helps to restructure one's self-concept, which can lead to more positive self-evaluations. Self-concept peaks in the late adult years (roughly 65-75), until physical and cognitive deterioration, which is associated with failing health, less flexibility, limited social

interaction, and role-identities (Britton & Britton 1972), precipitates negative thoughts and feelings about the self (Britton & Britton 1972).

### **3.02 To discuss about various sources of adjustment difficulties in old age.**

Adjustment, as defined by us, refers to an individual's ability to fulfil his obligations well in a variety of situations. It is concerned with the individual's ability to cope effectively with his surroundings. We also understand that the term "adjustment" has two different meanings. In one definition, it is a continuous process in which a person modifies his conduct to generate a more harmonious relationship between himself and his surroundings; the focus of his efforts may be on changing his behaviour and attitudes, or both.

Due to physical, psychological, and social changes, people in their later years face a variety of adjustment issues. These changes occur in prior phases of life as well. However, the alterations allowed them to explore more of the world, whereas the changes prevented them from undertaking some tasks or activities in their older age. It's thrilling to be able to do things that you previously couldn't, but being able to accomplish something and then not being able to do it again can lead to depression.

Some of the sources that are common among the old people which are responsible for creating adjustment difficulties during old age are discussed below:

#### **3.02.01 Emphasis on Youth:**

Someone who is young and still growing up is referred to as a youth. They are energised and powerful at this time. Diseases have a hard time attacking them. It is the best of all the stages where a person explores his surroundings and learns new things in life, but old people are not as energetic and robust as young people, and they are more susceptible to diseases, which adds to their issues. They are unable to live as comfortably as they did when they were younger. Some older individuals will object, claiming that old age begins only when you begin to feel old. As a result, they may claim that "age is determined by temperament rather than years."

Some people try to slow down the aging process by taking a lot of vitamins, getting sex hormone therapy, and having cosmetic surgery to hide the indications of aging. Many elderly people try to hide their age by looking like teenagers, becoming more daring, and participating in more physical activities. This mindset is a result of our youth-obsessed culture, which forces elderly people to avoid acknowledging their advancing years. However, the truth remains that one's health is deteriorating. Diabetics, arthritis, hypertension, breast cancer, heart disease, and repeated hospitalizations all contribute to a sense of despair and pessimism among this demographic.

Some elderly people are always criticizing their inability to achieve anything due to their age. To put it another way, they refuse to accept their limitations and instead reminisce about their youth. However, this causes them troubles. They become increasingly unable to embrace the changes of old age the more they reflect on their youth. They are becoming increasingly unhappy and unhealthy.

### **3.02.02 Retirement and financial hardship:**

Retirement comes with its own set of challenges. They were surrounded by others and engaged in work when they were at work, but then suddenly find themselves out of job. At this time, they also realise that their parental responsibilities are winding down, since their children have completed their education and are working in locations far from home. Their involvement is no longer desired or required as a result of these changes. All of this isolates them from their family, friends, and co-workers, badly affecting their sense of self-worth and identity.

They are not only dislocated when they leave the job, but they also lose a nice salary. They have gone from being the primary breadwinner to becoming a mere dependent as a result of the lower income. They are unable to meet their requirements. They must rely on others for every tiny necessity. Once they used to be able to meet the demands of others, but now that it is their turn, they feel helpless, which leads to sadness. To make matters worse, it's distressing not knowing how far ahead one must plan or how long one must rely financially on his children to meet his needs. He becomes even more despondent as a result of this. This has a negative impact on the lives of the elderly.

People in today's consumer society do not have enough money to assist their parents financially, nor do they see it as their moral responsibility. This is a really sad scenario that requires immediate attention.

### **3.02.03 Difficult Living Arrangement**

At any age, the family is the source of emotional, social, and financial support for the individual (Soldo and Agree, 1988). The ability of elderly people to cope with changes in health, income, social activities, and so on is heavily reliant on the assistance they receive from their family members. Gender, health state, the presence of a disability, social level, and societal norms all influence older people's living arrangements. During social, economic, and psychological crises, generations of older Indians have sought refuge in the extended family system. Even in rural areas, though, the conventional family is rapidly vanishing. Families are becoming more nuclear and smaller as a result of urbanisation, and they are not always capable of caring for elderly relatives. It is also common for children to relocate abroad owing to their work, and as a result, they are unable to keep their parents with them. As a result, many choose to place their parents in old age homes or with caregivers.

They require love, care, and support from their loved ones as they grow older. They are incapable of performing things hence they need support from others in practically every area. They expect not only a place to live, but also to be surrounded by people they care about. However, keeping them away from this causes them to become depressed as a result of being ignored and unloved.

### **3.02.04 Feeling of Social Isolation and Uselessness:**

Modern culture has given us the problem of loneliness and isolation. An elderly individual is forced to live on an island by society. He frequently loses his spouse and old pals. They

are also lonely because they have retired from a work. When they were working, they were surrounded by a large number of people; however, when they retire, the number of individuals they come into contact with rapidly decreases.

Loneliness has a negative impact on their mental health, which manifests itself in physical issues. In recent years, elderly insecurity has been a major source of concern, particularly in major cities. They are usually left alone with attendants to look after them.

At this time, they also realise that their parental responsibilities are winding down, since their children have completed their education and are working in locations far from home. Their involvement is no longer desired or required as a result of these changes. Furthermore, their health prevents them from working to generate money or helping others. They must rely on others for everything, even their day-to-day tasks. They started feeling useless for others generates mental difficulties and resulting in their behaviour.

### **3.02.05 Death anxiety:**

The end of life becomes a source of concern for many elderly people. People tend to become less engaged in life as they become older and more concerned about death. This is especially true for elderly adults whose physical or mental health is deteriorating. When their health deteriorates, individuals tend to focus on and become preoccupied with death. Another risk is the death of a spouse in old age. The loss of a partner might leave you feeling lonely and isolated. The death of close friends or relatives can cause shock in the elderly, discreetly reminding them of their frailty. A person's death, as well as the lives of their dependent spouse and children, might cause anxiety. This population's vulnerability to illness and impending mortality is a persistent source of stress, causing adjustment issues.

### **3.02.06 Changing Values:**

In many civilizations, the 'cultural status' of the elderly has fallen in the modern era. Elders are no longer considered as wisdom bearers, but as an unavoidable burden. This mindset is linked to changing influences such as increasing urbanisation, industrialization, Westernization, women's shifting roles, and the dissolution of traditional family structures and roles. Individualistic and self-centered social vacuums are replacing the mutuality of familial and communitarian notions in our culture. All of these shifting tendencies have a direct impact on our attitudes toward and responses to the aged. As a result, elderly parents are occasionally abused, dispossessed, tormented, abandoned, or thrown in old age institutions, with a significant portion of this community dying in loneliness and shame. As a result, the older population suffers from severe emotional pain and social isolation, which leads to maladjustment during this time.

### **3.02.07 Health:**

One's attitude, identity, and relationships are all influenced by one's health. Most of the population has difficulties embracing the truth of the process of aging once they begin to observe indicators of old age like grey hair, wrinkles, blood pressure changes, failing

eyesight and hearing abilities, decreasing sexual drive, etc. Millions of women suffer from osteoporosis, which causes discomfort, restricted movement, and spine shrivelling. There is a gradual deterioration of one's health. Diabetics, arthritis, hypertension, breast cancer, heart disease, and repeated hospitalizations all contribute to a sense of despair and pessimism among this demographic. Deteriorating health can lead to a reduction in mobility and an increase in dependency. Anxiety and worry are common in this population as their health deteriorates. Physical changes can have an impact on a person's self-confidence and sense of security. An elderly person may undergo an emotional collapse if they do not receive enough support and care.

#### **3.02.08 Declining Mental Ability:**

Mental and cognitive abilities may deteriorate as people age. There could be a deterioration in mental abilities, such as a slowing of learning new things and a slower processing of information. It is common knowledge that elderly people take longer to respond, think more slowly, and are less able to grasp new concepts or acquire new abilities. Memory loss is normal as people get older. Dementia, or the loss of memory and other cognitive faculties, has a significant impact on daily living. They develop symptoms such as poor memory, intolerance of change, disorientation, restlessness, insomnia, failure of judgement, the gradual formation of delusions and hallucinations, extreme-mental depression and agitation, severe mental clouding in which the individual becomes restless, combative, resistive, and incoherent, and severe mental clouding in which the individual becomes restless, combative, resistive, and incoherent. Strange behaviours such as wandering, physical violence, verbal outbursts, depression, and psychosis can all be signs of dementia. Alzheimer's disease affects a small percentage of people, and it is caused by nerve cell destruction in parts of the brain that control memory and other mental abilities. The cognitive flaws related to dementia and Alzheimer's disease substantially interferes with regular functioning of a person in mental capacities, emotional balance and interpersonal interactions and they get less adjusted individual with time for these issues.

#### **3.02.09 Mental Health Problems:**

Apart from these mental deficiencies, some elderly people suffer other mental health issues. Psychotic depressions are more common in the elderly. Some of them develop depression, which is characterised by feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, while others show signs of paranoia, which is characterised by suspicion and distrust of others, and hypochondria, which is characterised by dread of deadly illnesses. They become reliant as their mental abilities deteriorate. They have lost faith in their own abilities and judgments, despite their desire to manage the younger ones. They desire to be active in every aspect of family life and business. Because of the generation divide, the younger generation may disregard their comments and advise. They begin demanding their rights and power instead of adopting a sympathetic attitude toward the elderly. This may make them feel as if their dignity and value have been taken away from them. Their children



become depressed as a result of their feelings of deprivation, and they withdraw themselves from the people around them.

### **3.03 To discuss the positive effects of viewing old age constructively:**

There is a current movement in which misconceptions about aging are being challenged. The concept of a losing process has been replaced with the belief that the most advanced stages of life can be fertile ground for new accomplishments motivated by a desire for enjoyment and personal fulfilment. Experiences gained and information gained are gains that allow for the exploration of new identities, the implementation of projects left unfinished in previous phases, and the establishment of more profitable interactions with the world of young and old people. In line with this notion, the elderly stated that while the body may be aging, it will still serve all of its functions. It wasn't the same as it used to be, but it was more effective. It is a kind of happiness that they have learned from experience, that old age can be better thought and discussed without the myths and prejudices imposed by society. Liking their old body, with its needs for care and love, requiring more training to have it work properly, patience because they do not always remember how the day was, is a kind of happiness that they have learned from experience, that old age can be better thought and discussed without the myths and prejudices imposed by society. People should be enthused about something that isn't related to their current position, but is related to something that isn't related to their pessimism (for old age to be a positive experience it should be accompanied by continuous opportunities of health, participation, and security).

The World Health Organization coined the term "active aging" to describe this phenomenon at the end of the 1990s. The statement was developed with the goal of conveying a message that went beyond healthy aging, acknowledging that the elements and sanitary attention shaping the way individuals and populations age were the pain references. The modern society places a high value on youth, despite the fact that aging is a natural process that affects all humans. Having a negative attitude toward this stage of life causes the elderly to have the same attitude, which is one of the predefined meanings of old age. People who are unaware of this process absorb and pass on incorrect perceptions that contribute to isolation, both directly and indirectly, in order to isolate and accelerate the aging process. As a result, it is well recognised that men and women age in distinct ways. It isn't a question of who adjusts to it better or worse. All of the interviewees attempted to distinguish their individual experience from that of an elderly person in general: in this way, they all oppose rather than adapt to old age. An elderly person is always someone else; the truth of old age is disconcerting. Women adapt to old age better than males because they maintain a network of exchanges as they age, providing services mostly connected to caring for their grandkids and maintaining tight relationships with their family and descendants. This perspective, on the other hand, assumes that old age is a shared experience for both men and women. As a result, it is recognised that everyone ages in their own unique way, and that they can either live an

active life or find it difficult to find joy in life, or they can become excessively reliant on others.

Another concept, "successful aging," has gained popular in gerontological study in recent decades. It has evolved into a catch-all phrase for a wide range of more particular structures and instruments. Rowe and Kahn (1997) described successful aging as having three primary components: a low risk of disease and disease-related impairment, strong cognitive and physical functional capacity, and active participation in life. Furthermore, part of the concept of successful aging is a process of ongoing adjustment. It's important to remember that successful aging entails aging properly, as opposed to not aging at all. Furthermore, Depp and Jeste (2006) found that about a third of the elderly have aged successfully in their meta-analysis. Younger age, no smoking, no disabilities, musculoskeletal disorders or diabetes, and to a lesser extent, continued physical activity, social contacts, improved self-perception of health, less depression, and less cognitive decline or medical issues were all predictors of good aging.

Various theories on successful aging have been established. The idea of successful aging, according to The Model of Selective Optimization with Compensation and the Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory, denotes the resilience of persons who achieve a positive balance between gains and losses during the aging process (Baltes & Baltes, 1990 ). These authors claimed that older people might adjust for such losses and yet be content with their lives. Adaptive resource allocation procedures, which play a vital role in all functional domains and at all levels of analysis, are used by older individuals (e.g., interpersonal, behavioural, neuronal). Not only do optimization and compensation procedures generate resources, but they also rely on their availability. Optimization and compensation processes can be seen in the usage of technology and the acquisition of new skills. When losses begin to exceed gains in old life, selection becomes more apparent. As a result, older individuals focus on the most important goals, restructure their goal priorities, disengage from original goals, and define new goals (Freund & Baltes, 2002 ).

Adjustment to aging was considered as a dynamic phenomena that might be aided by ensuring the best possible fit between the person's demands and the characteristics of the environment. As part of the concept of successful aging, a process of long-term adjustment was suggested. Furthermore, some authors proposed other correction schemes. Goal-setting, self-acceptance, personal progress, meaning, and purpose in life, as well as basic resources, attitudes toward life, and self-referent beliefs, were later incorporated into adjustment definitions.

So, from the discussion it is understood that viewing the age positively and constructively helps a person to lead a normal and well-adjusted life before he makes an exit from life. It gives him the positive vibe that gives him power to lead the life normally though he poses some difficulties. Difficulties are there in every phase of life but it is us who can change those difficulties into opportunities. So, it is very much essential to have a positive outlook towards the age to maintain a peaceful life.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION:

Old age is a stage of life that people go through just before they die. The changes that occur during this period are unwanted, unattractive, and uncomfortable by the people, despite their desire to live a long life. Changes occur in physiological, cognitive, and personality aspects, just as they do in earlier stages of life. Intellectual transformations are not as dreadful as many people believe. Another characteristic that was not supposed to be stiff in old age is personality, however current research has demonstrated that personality is not hard but malleable. Other changes in one's life, such as retirement, the loss of a spouse, or a change in living arrangements, might be tough to adjust to. They tended to emphasize on the thrilling and adventurous nature of youth at the period. These are the kinds of conditions that make a person feel useless and isolated socially. However, if a person views these changes favourably and views aging as a good factor, age does not become a problem, even if the body becomes less supportive. It is their optimistic attitude that will provide them with the energy to live a happy life despite their difficulties. Problems arise in every stage of life, and we must confront them in order to make healthy adjustments through the stages of life.

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