

# Mental Health Concerns of the Elderly People in Punjab, India

Dr. Manju Goel

Regional Director, IGNOU Regional Centre, Khanna, Punjab

Ms. Mihika

Scholar, Department of Psychology (SOL), University of Delhi

## ABSTRACT

Elderly people are a vital human resource for the family and society. With the growing age, elderly people faces physical, social, emotional, and mental health problems due to the immigration of their family members' especially adult children. The study was done with an aim to identify various mental health concerns of elderly people and associated challenges. The study also focused on the social work interventions required to deal with the mental health issues of the elderly people living in Punjab, India whose children got settled internationally. A qualitative descriptive study was undertaken using non-probability sampling method, i.e., snow ball sampling with a sample of 60 respondents, specifically, only the parents whose one or more children were settled abroad. Interview of the respondents were conducted with the help of an interview guide. Almost all the respondents had one or the other mental health issues and feeling of loneliness, anxiety, emotional stress, fear of loss of spouse, cognitive decline, and depression. For sending the children abroad, respondents had taken loan or sold their property. A few of the parents shared that they supported their children without the feeling of being burdened as part of their responsibilities. The respondents also showed their concern that the economic stability of their immigrant children was an important aspect for them but the physical presence of the children would have solved many of the left behind parents' social, emotional, physical and mental health problems. The study reflected that the elderly persons were facing one or the other financial, physical and mental health problems due to the immigration of their children. Social workers play an important role in geriatric care, social workers facilitate all the possible psycho-social support and counselling to elderly people through social case-work and social group-work approach. It was suggested that to overcome the feeling of loneliness and isolation, there should be elderly people's forum and recreational centers for the elderly so that they could socially connect with their age group people. Also, there was a need to promote health care seeking behaviour amongst left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children

**Keywords:** Geriatric, Immigration, Mental Health, Loneliness, Isolation, Anxiety

## Introduction

Geriatric mental health is one of the major concerns in family mental health care. According to WHO (2025) in the year 2023, the world population of people aged 60 years and above were 1.1 billion and it is projected to be 2.1 billion by the year 2050. Elderly people are

considered to be a vital human resource for family and society as they contribute to society as an experienced volunteer and member. The elderly people are not a burden to society, they get engaged in caring the grandchildren, maintaining the household, taking care of the household necessities, guiding the youth and adult in the community organization and so on. With the

growing age, many of them faces physical and mental health problems. Although a good number of elderly people have sound health but many of them are at risk of developing psychiatric related health issues such as anxiety, phobia, depression, dementia along with chronic pain and physical mobility issues.

In India, Family is an important social unit. All the basic social, emotional, physical, economical needs of a member are taken care by the family members. In young age parents took the responsibility and try to support their children as much as they can on each and every aspect, needs and concerns both emotionally and financially. When parents are in their old age and become physically weak than the adult children of the family are expected to take care of the elderly parents. The study conducted by Prasad and Rani (2007) also reflected that traditionally, adult children and spouse in the family took the responsibility of taking care of the elderly persons. Mandal and Paul (2024) elaborated that in contemporary society the family structure has been changed, the joint family system has replaced largely with the nuclear family system. This change in family structure resulted because of the migration of the adult children nationally and internationally. One of the studies found that in India, a noticeable declining trend was seen in providing care and support to elderly persons because of the rising trend of having nuclear families where children got separated from their parents (Krishnaswamy et al., 2008). In the search of better employment opportunities and better living standard, large number of youth and adult emigrated from India, living behind their elderly parents (Samanta et al., 2015).

It was observed that the number of immigrations among youth and adult population was very high in the state of Punjab, India. Young and adult population migrated internationally for education and employment and got settled there. There were associated issues with immigration of the family members that elderly experienced like loneliness, dependency on neighbors and relatives, anxiety, phobia, depression, financial issues and related stress including physical health problems due to growing age. In a study conducted by Adhikari (2011), it was assessed that due to youth migration, elderly parents felt helpless in accessing health care services and other types of support services. The study highlighted that Immigration lead to disturbances in the interaction amongst family members resulted in less social and emotional care and support. Elderly persons found it difficult to do daily household chores and daily routine tasks to survive. All this contributed social stress and social isolation for the left behind elderly parents. Another study found that with the growing age elderly persons faced physical health problems, while the

immigration of their adult children had led to associated mental health problems (Antman, 2010).

In a study conducted by Sarkar et al., (2023), it was noticed that elderly parent living with their children had a better access to physical and mental health care services. While left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children had poor access to health care services resulted in anxiety and depression. Previous researches aimed at fetching the attention of stakeholders towards the poor mental health status of the elderly parents of the immigrated children. The studies suggested that there was a need to create awareness among immigrated children about the needs and concerns of the elderly parents and maintaining regular contact with them. It was also felt that the immigrated children should plan frequent visits to their parents (Adhikari et al., 2011; Samanta et al., 2015; Sarkar et al., 2023).

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study were

- To identify various mental health concerns and associated challenges of the left behind elderly parents of the children settled abroad with special reference to Punjab, India
- To develop social work interventions to deal with the mental health issues of the elderly people living in Punjab, India whose children got settled internationally

### **Methods**

It was a qualitative descriptive study aimed at describing psycho-social aspects related to mental health of the elderly. The study used non-probability sampling method i.e., snow ball sampling because sample of the study, comprised of the only elderly parents (respondents) whose children were settled abroad. Sample was selected based on the recommendation of other previous respondents. Both primary and secondary sources were used for data collection. Interview were conducted by using interview guide as tool of data collection. The sample comprised of 60 respondents who belonged to the age of 60 years and above and whose children emigrated from Punjab, India.

**Inclusion Criteria:** The sample comprised of the elderly people from the age of 60 years and above and belonged to the state of Punjab, India and whose children immigrated.

**Exclusion Criteria:** The sample did not comprise of the elderly people who were not from the age of 60 years and above and who do not belong to the state of Punjab, India and whose children did not immigrate.

**Ethical Consideration:** From all the respondents involved in the present study, a written consent was obtained. They were explained about the purpose of conducting the study.

## Results

### General Profile of the Respondents

General profile of the respondents indicated the age, education level, gender, monthly family income and source of income. Table 1 revealed that the age of the respondents of the study were between the age group 60-70 years (36), 70-80 years (22), 80 years and above (02). Some of the elderly people were living alone (13), some were living with their other children settled in Punjab, India (9) apart from the children settled abroad, while 38 elderly people were living with their spouse. Education level of respondents were Illiterate (07), Upto 10<sup>th</sup> class (13), Up to 12<sup>th</sup> Class (26), Under-Graduate (13), and Post-Graduate (01). Almost equal representation of male (28) and female (32) respondents was noticed on the basis of gender.

**Table 1: General profile of the respondents**

Categories	Living alone	Living with other Children	Living with Spouse	Total
<b>Age (in years)</b>				
60-70	4	4	28	36
70-80	8	4	10	22
80 and above	1	1	0	2
Total	13	9	38	60
<b>Education</b>				
Illiterate	2	1	4	7
Up to 10 <sup>th</sup> Class	2	2	9	13
Up to 12 <sup>th</sup> Class	6	2	18	26
Under-Graduate	3	4	6	13
Post-Graduate	-	-	1	1
Total	13	9	38	60
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	9	3	16	28
Female	4	6	22	32
Total	13	9	38	60
<b>Monthly Family Income (in ₹)</b>				
Up to 5000	1	-	-	1
5,000-10,000	5	-	-	5
10,000-15,000	6	-	-	6
15,000-20,000	-	2	11	13

20,000 and above	1	7	27	35
Total	13	9	38	60
<b>Source of Income</b>				
Business	-	3	12	15
Pension	1	2	2	5
Property rent	4	2	10	16
Agriculture	-	-	3	3
O t h e r Remittances*	8	2	11	21
Total	13	9	38	60

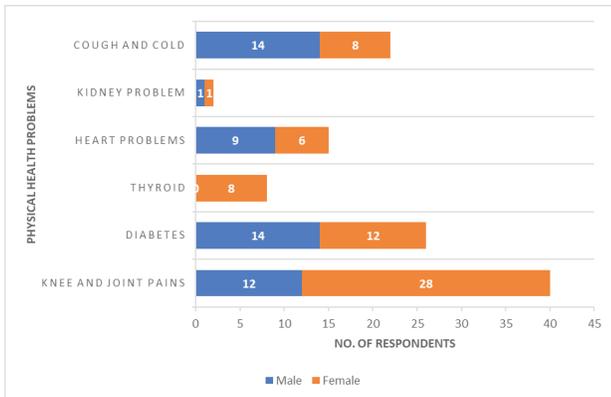
\* Other Remittances – Interest from saving and investments, money received from the children settled abroad

Monthly family income of the respondents varied between the ranges of rupees (₹) Upto 5000 (01), 5,000-10,000 (05), 10,000-15,000 (06), 15,000-20,000 (13), 20,000 and above (35). Respondents of the study shared that the source of income were business (15), Pension (05), Property rent (16), Agriculture (03). Table 1 reflected that remittances in the form of Interest from saving and investments and money received from the children settled abroad were received by the respondents (21). The respondents who received remittances from their immigrated children showed apprehension that if their children stop sending remittances, it would be difficult for them to live an economically smooth life. There were few parents who shared that the remittances made their life stable but physical availability of their children did matter for their emotional health and well-being.

Previous studies have reflected that the economic condition of the left behind elderly parents had an impact on their overall health status. The elderly people who did not have an economic support and belonged to poor socio-economic background suffered more with mental health problems associated with physical health issues (Mandal & Paul, 2024; Samanta et al., 2015; Sarkar et al., 2023). In a study conducted by Gopinath and Poornappriya (2020), impact of economic, social and health aspects on left behind elderly people of immigrated children were examined, it was found that remittances from migrants could improve the health and nutrition of elders left behind, but in many cases financial support was not provided by the immigrants to their left behind elderly parents resulted in poor health and nutritional status of elderly people.

### Physical Health Problems Experienced by the Elderly People

The respondents of the study were asked to inform about the physical health problems experienced by them.



**Figure 1: Physical health problems experienced by the elderly people**

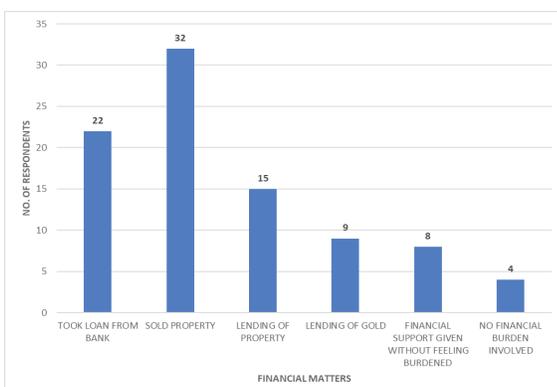
\*N=60 (Multiple Responses)

Figure 1 showed that the common physical health problems faced by the elderly people were knee and joint pains (40), diabetes (26), Thyroid (08), Heart Problems (15), Kidney Problem (02) and and cough and cold (22). The health problem related to knee and joint pains was reported by more females (28) than males (12) while cough and cold was reported by more males (14) than females (08). Thyroid was reported by female (08) only.

Study conducted by Adhikari (2011) found that the left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children were more concerned of taking care of their physical health. As they understood that there were no one who would take care of them so, it was better to be more cautious.

### Financial Matters Related to the Immigration

For getting visa done and migration to other countries, the family spends money around 30 to 40 Lac. Many a times the family took loan, and spend their whole life in clearance of debt. For better education and better social status, the migrated children demand for money and for selling the family assets like gold, land or house.



**Figure 2: Financial matters related to the immigration**

\*N=60 (Multiple responses)

Figure 2 reflected that respondents (22) had taken loans from the bank for sending their children abroad for study and work. Many of the respondents (32) revealed that they had to sell out their property for international migration of their children. Some of the respondents (09) were in pain while stating that they had to lend their property or gold for the settlement of their children abroad.

Respondents also highlighted that immigration was quite smooth if one was going legally, it involved comparatively less financial burden infact genuine amount of money was required related to visa formalities. It was more difficult and involved financial burden if one was trying and moving internationally using illegal way or choosing a dunki Route (illegal migration route).

There were respondents (8) who elaborated by saying that they were not feeling burdened as that was the responsibility of the parents to support their children. Respondents were in opinion that if parents were financially strong they should support their children financially as well as emotionally in the transition phase from one country to another for the well-being of the children. It was reported by the respondents (4) that no financial burden was involved in the settlement of their children internationally as the children themselves bore all the financial burden and due to their educational qualification, they moved on permanent residence visa. Respondents also stated that immigrant children planned the visit of their parents to the international countries. Although there were few parents who told that their children have become greedy and now demanding their right to property.

One of the respondents was worried on non-settlement of their children in Canada, she said that after 7 years of immigration still the children do not own a house there. They asked for money from us every now and then in the form of cash or in-kind for fulfilling some of their necessities. Sometimes, we were burdened on their financial requests but we had to make some arrangements.

Many of the studies highlighted that for the purpose of immigration in search of better educational and job opportunity and better life style forced people to immigrate to developed countries where cost of living was very high. Due to social pressure and hoping for a bright future, parents aimed to send their young and adult children to other countries. They spend all their savings, took lone, and sold property and other assets. Many of the immigrated children got settled to other countries. But for some parents, the settlement of their children abroad became shocking and painful if, the immigrated children stop interacting, sending remittances, caring and pampering the growing parents and that resulted in increased stress and loneliness

(Gopinath & Poornappriya, 2020; Ke Y, 2019; Maharani, 2016; Ng ST, 2017).

### **Mental Health Concerns of the Left behind Elderly People**

It has been observed that almost all the respondents were worried and complaint that their children were not well settled. They were not getting well paid jobs, even after many years of their international migration. Those who went on study visa were not getting enrolled in good educational institution as per their dreams, choices and expectations. Due to lack of awareness and exposure, elderly people felt helpless to support their children settled abroad on the matters pertaining to finances, emotions, barriers related to education and work opportunities abroad. Many of the respondents cited that it was social pressure and peer pressure which forced them of sending the children abroad. Some of the mental health concerns raised by the elderly were reflected in the figure 3.

### **Loneliness**

Figure 3 reflected that all the respondents (60) had a feeling of loneliness due to their children settlement internationally. Some of them (28) were living with their other children but they cited that the feeling of loneliness arose because of their growing age and missing the children who were settled abroad and not able to visit the parents frequently. Few respondents (9) reflected that being alone means loneliness, although they tried their level best to overcome the feeling of loneliness but at the end of the day, one was alone only.

*One of the respondents described his feelings in a very positive way saying that we should not try to hinder the progress of our children. If they have an option to go abroad and get settled over there, we should encourage them. We have lived our life in our own way so we should not become self-centered in case of our children's settlement. We should not express our emotional pain related to the detachment with the children due to their immigration to other countries."*

It was observed that the respondent felt loneliness but tried to hide his emotions. Although feeling of pain was observed in his voice.

Some of the respondents shared that they felt lonely. But this experience of loneliness was same even if they get settled with their children abroad.

*One of the respondents said that abroad, we have no one to talk to around us, no helping hand to do household chores, if we fall sick than the health check-up was very costly and we became burden on our children but in Punjab we have helping hands*

*to do household chores, we have our social network to interact, even health care was available in the vicinity in Punjab.*

*Another respondent said, we did not know driving and without car one could not travel and roam within the international country like Canada from one place to another so, we were dependent on our children if, we need to visit any place, we had to wait for the weekends.*

Antman (2010) in his study observed that supportive family relationships lessens the feeling of loneliness among left behind elderly parents of immigrants. Loneliness has a strong association with less interpersonal communication and social support.

### **Social Isolation**

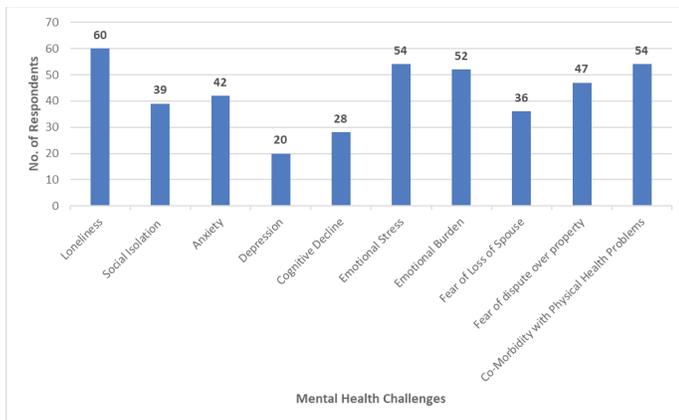
It was depicted in figure 3 that the respondents (39) of the study felt that loneliness lead to social isolation, as they were not interested in interacting with others and sometimes others felt that the elderly people (respondents') were irritating them with too much of interaction carried out. Some of the respondents told that they were intentionally avoided interacting with others as they did not want others to know that their children were not properly and fully settled abroad and still struggling with many social, emotional, and financial issues.

*One of the respondents cited that it was a social pressure that we were agreed for the settlement of our children abroad, otherwise we were not at all comfortable. But in Punjab, international immigration has become a trend and social status.*

*Another respondent had shown her painful emotions that they had got their son married and invested their savings in sending the daughter-in-law to Canada as she was highly educated. It came as a shock to the family when after settled down at Canada, the daughter-in-law demanded for a divorce.*

It was observed that the respondent was concerned of the mental harassment happened with her son and financial loss faced by them without any social, psychological gain. As per their feelings, this incidence brought them social guilt and shame.

Previous studies have found that social isolation increased in the absence of social interaction with the neighbours and relatives. Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety were reduced in the elderly people who participated in the social-cultural activities and established social relationship and communication with friends and relatives. Social interaction had positive impact on the psycho-social well-being of the left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children (Antman, 2010; Ke Y, 2019; Maharani, 2016; Ng ST, 2017).



**Figure 3: Mental health concerns of the left behind elderly people**

\*N=60 (Multiple Response)

### Anxiety

Many of the respondents (42) felt anxious because the visit of the children settled abroad were limited due to the huge travelling expenses. It was difficult for the parents also to visit their children internationally because of the same reason i.e., travelling expenses as well as long travelling hours having negative impact on elderly persons' physical health.

*A respondent expressed anxiety by telling that both of his sons were still emigrating from one country to another and not get settled permanently anywhere. They had been to Singapore, Canada and now in Dubai. There was a huge money and pressure involved in multiple immigrations.*

Many studies observed that if the elderly people were getting remittances from their immigrated children, their accessibility to health care services was improved, but physical absence of their immigrated children had serious repercussions on left behind elderly parents physically and mentally leading to mental health problems such as anxiety and sadness (Adhikari et al., 2011; Antman, 2010; Gopinath & Poornappriya, 2020)

### Depression

Depression was experienced by many of the respondents (20). They had the feeling that no one was there to take care of them. Many a times they had the feeling that they were useless, having no aim in life. The feeling made them hopeless and blame self for not stopping their children from migrating to other country. Additionally, they were upset that their children were still not settled properly.

*Many of the respondents shared that their children had earned higher degrees from India like, B.Tech, B.D.S, and MBA but they were not getting good opportunities to work abroad on the*

*basis of their qualifications. They were engaged in daily wage occupations like, driving, sales boy/girl, and front office jobs.*

Respondents had shared emotional pain, stress and tension on non-settlement of their immigrated children resulted in depression and anxiety. In a study conducted by Gopinath and Poornappriya (2020) the common mental health problems faced by the elderly were depression and anxiety. Study highlighted that the left behind elderly people usually suffered from high rate of depressive symptoms. Lack of awareness about mental health problems contributed to the worsened condition of the people with mental health problems because of the delay in accessing the mental health care services.

### Cognitive Decline

With the growing age many of the respondents (28) experienced the cognitive decline. They informed that they forgot the things very easily and it created a lot of tension in their life. Many of the important tasks were not done because of their forgetfulness.

*One of the respondents told that once she left the gas stove burner tuned on after preparing the food. Almost after 2 hours she came to the kitchen and realised the mistake done by her due to weak memory. But by God grace they were saved from anything bad happening.*

Few studies stated that social isolation was a risk factor for cognitive decline such as dementia and associated health issues like hypertension, heart diseases, anxiety and depression. It was suggested that elderly people need to get engaged socially (Maharani, 2016; Livingston, 2017).

### Emotional Stress

It was expressed by the respondents that getting part away with the loved ones was not very easy. Some of them informed that it was 5-6 years they had not met with their children. Majority of the respondents (54) were emotionally feeling stressed. Some of them were stressed because of the long duration of not been in touch with their children while others were stressed that now their children were never be so closed to them. Few of them were disturbed and stressed that they had not received any kind of emotional and family support from their children who were settled abroad.

Some of the respondents shared that their children settled abroad also face a lot of mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and loneliness as they were alone there and not settled well.

*One of the respondents shared that her son is facing mental health issues and facing a lot of complications abroad. Even he could not take treatment there but still he did not want to come back home because of social as well as peer pressure here in*

*Punjab. When his mental health problem of anxiety increased and not in control than only he visited India for the treatment. It not only created financial stress but also psychological and emotional stress for her being the only living parent.*

It was analysed by the previous studies that emotional stress was equally faced by the immigrated children as well as the left behind elderly parents. It was suggested that stress should be dealt with positivity, sharing the emotions was important. Family support played an important role in dealing with stressful situations and improving the psycho-social well-being (Adhikari et al., 2011; Gopinath & Poornappriya, 2020; Krishnaswamy et al., 2008).

### **Emotional Burden**

Respondents (52) shared that they had experienced emotionally burdened as the children with whom they were living in Punjab sometimes expressed agony of taking care of elderly parents alone. The children settled abroad rarely showed concern and responsibility of taking care of the elderly parents. One of the respondents said that when no one took responsibility of caring than it was natural to feel emotionally burdened by the elderly parents. Sometimes they felt burdened on society too.

*One of the respondents said, we had spent all our earning on getting our son settled in Canada but after settling down there, he rarely had a feeling to connect with us or calling and visiting us in India.*

*Another respondent said, my daughter-in-law had a feeling of responsibility towards us and she made phone call to us almost on every weekend but our son rarely talked. Our grand children did not like to connect with us too much as they had no emotions connected with us, the grand children had not met us from a long time.*

Many of the researchers found that if, the immigrated children provided social and emotional support to the left behind parents than the parents were less likely felt burdened. Sense of responsibility and feeling of reciprocity between family members played a vital role in reducing the emotional stress and burden (Mandal & Paul, 2024; Prasad & Rani, 2007; Sarkar et al., 2023).

### **Fear of Loss of Spouse**

Many of respondents (36) had a feeling of fear of loss of spouse. They accepted that it was a harsh reality that one day they had to leave the world but still the feeling of living alone without spouse created panic among them.

*One of the respondents shared that the only support we have was our spouse. Mutual understanding with the spouse made the life quite comfortable and easy, life without spouse was not easy to even think about.*

Researchers analysed that because of the feeling of loneliness and isolation, the elderly people had a fear of losing the spouse. Mutual understanding, caring and sharing between the elderly couple made them dependent on each other and heightened isolation created panic of being alone in future. In the absence of their children, the fear of losing the spouse got increased (Gopinath & Poornappriya, 2020; Prasad & Rani, 2007; Sarkar et al., 2023).

### **Fear of dispute over property**

Respondents (47) shared that they had worked very hard to live their life and earned whatever they had like property, social recognition and respect in society. The respondents shared that now a days children did not have a self-respect and they were behind parents' property and other assets.

*Many of the respondents had complaint that the immigration to other countries involved a lot of money. They had sold out their properties so that their offspring could get settled in an international country.*

Children raised their concerns over the parental property and demand their share in parent's property as the Right to Property. Many of the respondents expressed a feeling of anger towards their immigrated children that in the absence of them, the other children settled in Punjab and relatives were taking care of the left behind elderly people, so the children settled abroad should not claim for the property, they could request but it should be the choice and decision of the parents. Although some of the elderly parents had said that whatever assets they had were anyways would distribute amongst all the children but children settled abroad should not pressurise the parents for the property distribution.

It was observed by the previous researchers that most of the immigrated children who were settled economically well, showed a sense of responsibility towards their left behind parents and sent remittances, often planned visit to the parents (Antman, 2010; Gopinath & Poornappriya, 2020). Some of the studies reflected that the immigrated children who were not settled properly, repeatedly ask for financial help from the left behind parents. The gaps existed in communication between the immigrated children and left behind parents caused fear, tension and misunderstandings related to financial matters (Adhikari et al., 2011; Mandal & Paul, 2024; Sarkar et al., 2023).

### **Co-Morbidity with Physical Health Problems**

Almost all the respondents (54) were disturbed because of their deteriorated health and dependency on the medicine. Most of them had one or the other physical health problems and associated mental health problems. Some of the respondents were worried that if, their health

further deteriorated and they would become dependent than who would take care of them. All the respondents had complaint of having one or the other physical health problems such as diabetes, knee and joint pains, cough and cold, and kidney problems. The respondents were also facing associated mental health problems such as loneliness, isolation, anxiety, cognitive disturbances/decline, emotional stress and depression.

In a study carried out by Adhikari (2011) it was evident that there was significant relationship between the immigration of the adult children and poor mental health condition of elderly parents. Although it was found that left behind parents were more concerned in utilizing health care facilities in order to minimize morbidity.

### **Suggestions Sought from Elderly People for their Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being**

Respondents were asked to suggest some interventions for their physical and mental health being. The respondents (56) were in the opinion that though the physical distance was too much but a video call by children could make their life bit happy. The elderly people expressed that at least one visit in a year or two of their children to India could help them emotionally. Almost all the respondents had felt that physical presence of the children would definitely provide the elderly parents an emotional support.

It was observed that many of the respondents (39) have not engaged themselves socially. So, they should be encouraged to participate in social and religious events to keep themselves contented, relaxed and to combat the feeling of loneliness and isolation.

Respondents (22) suggested that it is required that the immigrated children should maintain a good relationship with the neighbours and relatives staying nearby of their left behind parents. The children should maintain a regular contact with the neighbour and relatives in order to facilitate the social and emotional well-being of their parents.

The respondents (29) were in opinion that the children should take care of the financial condition of their left behind parents. In case if, there would be a paucity of economic resources, the children should ensure timely monetary assistance to their parents. If, the left behind parents were financially secured and sound, the children should not emotionally upset their parents unnecessarily for forcing them to provide the children's share in the property by selling it off. The children should understand that the property and assets made by their parents were their parents' life earnings, let them have a feeling of emotional and financial security and help them not to develop a negative opinion that their children were behind their parent's property and other assets.

Respondents (18) shared that if, the left behind elderly parents would need any kind of medical help, the immigrated children should do the follow ups via phone calls or video calls. The children should ensure whether the parents were consulting the doctor, taking medicines, getting the necessary advisable medical check-ups and investigations done or not taking care of selves due to the paucity of funds or lack of awareness.

Adhikari (2011) in his study suggested that to reduce the morbidity among left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children, there was a need to plan and implement programmes focussing on prevention and treatment of mental health problems. There was also a need to encourage health care-seeking behaviour among the left behind parents.

### **Social Work interventions**

As part of geriatric care, social work interventions form an essential part of caring the elderly people whose children have settled to other countries. The findings of the present study reflected that the elderly people faced challenges related to physical and mental health. There is a strong need to facilitate all the possible Psycho-social support to elderly people whose children have settled abroad through social and emotional connectivity with the neighbours, relatives and community. As suggested by the respondents, it is very important that the immigrated children should stay connected with the elderly parents in Punjab via phone calls/video calls and through other social media platforms. The children should plan their visit to India atleast once in a year or two. It was also stressed by the respondents that the children should ensure and plan timely interventions financial and medically in case of any medical exigencies faced by the left behind parents.

Social Work practitioners can help and motivate the elderly people in maintaining the regular communication and connection with their immigrated children to strengthen the family bond. Social workers should encourage the elderly people to participate in social and religious activities organized in the community. It is very much needed to have a sense of belongingness and attachment with the community and participation in social and religious activities would help the elderly people to combat feeling of loneliness and isolation.

Social workers engaged in geriatric care can conduct home-visits and connect telephonically with the elderly people to facilitate emotional support. Social Work interventions also focus on providing psycho-social support and counselling to the elderly people who are diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and other psychiatric disorders. Social workers should help the elderly people through social case-work and social group-work approach.

Social workers should facilitate and encourage the elderly people in accessing health care facilities to lead a quality life by preventing and curing illnesses and other health problems. Social Work practitioners should create awareness among elderly to practice yoga and meditation for the physical and mental health and well-being. Also, there is a need to promote health care seeking behaviour amongst left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children.

Social workers should encourage the elderly people to join support groups such as Recreational Centres and Elderly People's Forum for social interaction and mutual psycho-social support provided by the elderly people to each other.

Social work practitioners through their writings and publications should create awareness about the needs, challenges and concerns of the elderly people whose children have settled abroad.

Social workers should work towards making documentaries related to the psycho-social needs and concerns of the elderly people and create awareness among immigrated children by using various social media platforms.

Social workers should advocate for policies related to the well-being of the elderly people. Social workers should focus on strengthening the family bond and social networks of the left behind elderly people of the immigrated children.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study reflected that the left behind elderly parents of the immigrants from Punjab had faced many physical, social, emotional, financial and psychological hurdles. They had experienced a feeling of loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety, cognitive decline alongwith the co- morbidity and reduced physical mobility. The results highlighted that it was not easy to process visa for immigration of the children as it required a huge amount of money. It was shared by the respondents that they had taken loan or sold their property and other assets for the smooth transition of their children to abroad. There were pains and complaints from the parents that even after many years of the immigration of their children, their children were still not settled properly in other countries. The left behind elderly people were feeling emotionally stressed and burdened. Though there were parents who shared that they supported their children without the feeling of being burdened as part of their responsibilities. The respondents also showed their concern that the economic stability of their immigrant children was an important aspect for them but the physical presence of the children

would have solved many of the left behind parents' social, emotional, physical and mental health problems. With the growing age, the elderly parents had the fear of losing their spouse because the spouse was the only support they have. Elderly parents were in opinion that the immigrated children should not pressurize their parents to provide children's share in the parental property. The immigrated children should respect the decision of the parents' regarding right to property.

Social workers play an important role in geriatric care, there is a strong need to facilitate all the possible psycho-social support to elderly people whose children have settled abroad. Social Work practitioners can help and motivate the elderly people in maintaining the regular communication with their immigrated children to strengthen the family bond and should participate in social and religious activities organized in the community. Social Work interventions also focus on providing psycho-social support and counselling to the elderly people and help the elderly people through social case-work and social group-work approach. Social work practitioners through their writings, publications and documentaries should create awareness about the needs, challenges and concerns of the elderly people whose children have settled abroad. It was suggested that to overcome the feeling of loneliness and isolation, there should be elderly people's forum and recreational centers for the elderly so that they could socially connect with their age group people for their own well-being and sound mental health conditions. Also, there was a need to promote health care seeking behaviour amongst left behind elderly parents of the immigrated children.

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