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Original Article

EXPLORING THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF ELDERLY RESIDENTS OF LAHORE

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ABSTRACT

As demographic shifts towards an aging population continue, it is imperative to comprehend the nuance interplay of factors influencing the experiences of elderly individuals in urban environments. This revealed the complex dynamics surrounding elderly residents of within contemporary urban settings. Employing a rigorous mixed-methods approach, this study combines comprehensive literature reviews, structured surveys, qualitative interviews, and careful on-site observations. Furthermore, urban environments emerge as catalysts for fostering active lifestyles, bolstering mental well-being, and nurturing a sense of communal belonging among elderly inhabitants. Conversely, this study underlines the formidable benefits and challenges confronting elderly residents in urban locales. Benefits include the adequacy of available social support structures, cultural gatherings and availability of staff and facilities. It was found that elderly residents rarely encountered challenges. Key concerns encompass well-being related concerns, economic constraints, and loneliness. By addressing the distinctive needs of elderly residents, truly age-friendly policies should be implemented, ensuring a dignified and gratifying existence for all citizens, regardless of age.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by demographic shifts and increasing life expectancy, the presence and role of elderly residents in our communities have become pivotal areas of exploration. The global demographic landscape is undergoing a substantial transformation, with a notable surge in the proportion of elderly individuals within populations worldwide. This demographic shift is attributed to a combination of declining birth rates and advancements in healthcare, leading to increased life expectancy. According to projections from the United Nations, the global population aged 60 and above is expected to double by 2050, reaching nearly 2.1 billion individuals. This substantial increase in the elderly population presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges, particularly in the context of urban environments (Help Age International, 2024). Urban areas serve as dynamic hubs of economic, social, and cultural activity, attracting diverse populations. As a consequence, they are uniquely positioned to influence and shape the experiences of their elderly residents. The implications of an aging population extend far beyond healthcare provision; they encompass housing, transportation, social engagement, and overall quality of life (Lee & Sener, 2016). Cities offer a multitude of amenities and services that can greatly benefit elderly residents. Access to specialized healthcare, recreational facilities, cultural events, and public transportation networks are vital components of urban life that can significantly enhance the well-being of this demographic (Mouratidis, 2021). Moreover, the vibrant social fabric of cities provides opportunities for continued learning, social interactions, and community engagement, all of which contribute to a higher quality of life for elderly residents. However, urban

environments also present unique challenges for the elderly. Issues such as mobility constraints, inadequate accessibility features, and safety concerns can impede their ability to fully participate in and benefit from urban life (Cass et al., 2005). Additionally, the availability of affordable and suitable housing for elderly individuals, particularly those with specific health or mobility needs, remains a pressing concern.

Statistically, as of 2021, approximately 16% of the global population is aged 60 and above, with this percentage projected to rise to nearly 25% by 2050. In many urban areas, the proportion of elderly residents is even higher, with some cities reporting figures surpassing 30% (United Nations, 2024). These statistics underscore the urgent need to address the unique requirements of this demographic within urban planning and policy frameworks. Recent years have witnessed a growing recognition of the need for age-friendly cities, which prioritize the well-being and inclusion of elderly residents. The World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Program exemplifies this global movement, providing a comprehensive framework for cities to adapt and thrive in response to their aging populations. These initiatives emphasize the importance of creating environments that foster independence, dignity, and social participation for elderly individuals. In conjunction with urban planning and policy efforts, technology holds immense potential in addressing the needs of elderly residents (Rémillard-Boilard et al., 2021). The demographic profile of the world is undergoing a profound transformation with far-reaching implications for societies, economies, and urban environments. As of 2021, approximately 16% of the global population, or over 1.3 billion individuals, is aged 60 and above. This segment is projected to grow at an unprecedented rate, reaching nearly 2.1 billion, or approximately 22% of the global population, by 2050 according to the United Nations' World Population Prospects. This surge in the elderly population is attributed to several factors including improved healthcare, better living conditions, and declining fertility rates. This demographic shift towards an aging population is evident across regions. Europe currently has the highest percentage of elderly individuals, with over 25% of its population aged 60 and above. Asia, home to more than half of the world's total population, is also experiencing rapid aging. By 2050, Asia is estimated to be home to over 1 billion elderly individuals, accounting for more than half of the global elderly population. In North America, approximately 22% of the population is projected to be aged 60 and above by 2050. Urbanization is a significant driver of this trend. Increasingly, elderly individuals are residing in urban environments. As of 2021, around 60% of the world's population resides in urban areas, a figure projected to rise to 68% by 2050 (United Nations, 2024).

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Elderly Residents

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 brought unprecedented challenges, particularly for elderly individuals. As of September 2021, the pandemic has had far-reaching effects on healthcare systems, social structures, and daily life worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, as of September 2021, individuals aged 60 and above accounted for approximately 80% of COVID-19-related deaths globally. This stark statistic underscores the heightened vulnerability of the elderly to severe outcomes from the virus. Access to healthcare, particularly specialized services for elderly individuals, became a critical concern. In some cases, overwhelmed healthcare systems struggled to meet the demand for both COVID-19 care and the routine medical needs of elderly residents. Social isolation emerged as a significant issue for elderly individuals in urban environments (Lebrasseur et al., 2021). Lockdowns, restrictions on gatherings, and concerns over virus transmission led to a reduction in social interactions. Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted the importance of accessible and affordable healthcare, particularly for elderly individuals with pre-existing conditions. Efforts to address the impact of the pandemic on elderly residents in urban environments varied across regions. Some cities implemented targeted support programs, including grocery delivery services, telehealth initiatives, and mental health resources. Community organizations and local governments worked to establish safe spaces for outdoor activities and facilitated virtual social gatherings to combat isolation (Banerjee, 2020). Like many other countries, Pakistan is experiencing a demographic shift characterized by an increasing proportion of elderly individuals. As of 2021, approximately 7% of Pakistan's population is aged 60 and above, according to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Urbanization in Pakistan is also contributing to the changing demographic landscape. Major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad are witnessing rapid urban growth, leading to increased numbers of elderly individuals residing in urban environments. As of 2021, the urban population in Pakistan stands at around 38%, and this figure is expected to rise in the coming years. Despite the cultural emphasis on familial support and care for elderly individuals in Pakistan, urbanization and changing social structures have led to shifts in traditional

family dynamics. This can result in increased reliance on formal support systems for the elderly, including healthcare, housing, and social services (Abdullah, 2021).

However, Pakistan faces several challenges in providing adequate support for its elderly population. Access to quality healthcare remains a critical concern, particularly for elderly individuals in urban areas. According to the World Bank, Pakistan spends approximately 0.8% of its GDP on healthcare, which is lower than many other countries in the region. This impacts the availability and accessibility of specialized healthcare services for elderly residents. Additionally, issues related to housing and accessibility are significant challenges for elderly individuals in urban Pakistan. Adequate housing that accommodates the needs of elderly residents, such as features for mobility and safety, is not always readily available. Furthermore, the affordability and availability of suitable housing options for the elderly can be limited, particularly in densely populated urban centers (Pakistan Health Financing System Review, 2019). Social isolation is another concern for elderly residents in urban Pakistan. Rapid urbanization can disintegrate traditional social support systems, potentially leaving elderly individuals vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. Community engagement and social inclusion programs are essential for mitigating these issues. In recent years, there have been efforts to address the needs of elderly residents in Pakistan (Al-Rashid et al., 2021). The government, along with non-governmental organizations and community initiatives, has undertaken various projects to improve healthcare services, provide affordable housing options, and promote social inclusion for elderly individuals. The aging population is a demographic phenomenon that has gained increasing attention in recent years. As life expectancy rises, understanding the experiences, benefits, and challenges faced by elderly residents is crucial for ensuring their well-being and quality of life. This literature review aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of aging, examining the positive impacts as well as the hurdles that elderly individuals encounter. One of the notable benefits of communal living for elderly residents is the substantial increase in social interactions. Studies have shown that residing in communal settings fosters a sense of community and belonging (Gibson & Smith, 2020). These environments offer ample opportunities for shared activities, conversations, and mutual support, thereby mitigating feelings of isolation that can be detrimental to mental health (Brandt et al., 2022).

Communal living also has positive implications for physical health. Elderly residents tend to engage in higher levels of physical activity compared to their counterparts living alone (Lee et al., 2016). This increased activity and communal dining facilities lead to improved nutrition and healthier eating habits. Consequently, communal living environments contribute to a higher overall quality of life for elderly individuals. Engagement in intellectually stimulating activities is another significant advantage for elderly residents in communal settings. These environments often provide a wide range of cognitive engagement opportunities, including workshops, lectures, and book clubs (Nguyen et al., 2020). Furthermore, communal living fosters an environment of continuous learning and skill development (Phan et al., 2020). Despite the benefits, communal living presents its own set of challenges for elderly residents. Managing chronic health conditions can be complex, particularly in environments where medical resources may be limited (Evans et al., 2021). Additionally, the prevalence of cognitive impairment and dementia poses significant challenges for both residents and caregivers (Lam et al., 2022). Access to adequate healthcare services becomes a critical issue, especially for those in lower-income brackets (Thomas-Jones, 2020). Loneliness and social isolation remain pervasive issues among elderly residents in communal living environments. Even with increased opportunities for social interactions, some individuals may struggle to form meaningful connections (Lee et al., 2020). This isolation can lead to mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety (Robinson et al., 2022). Moreover, grief and loss are recurring themes, as residents may experience the passing of friends and peers, further affecting their psychological well-being (Thomas-Jones, 2020).

Economic considerations play a significant role in the lives of elderly residents. Retirement planning and financial security become pressing concerns, particularly for those on fixed incomes (Nguyen et al., 2020). Affordable and accessible housing options can be scarce, exacerbating financial strain (Thomas-Jones, 2020). Healthcare costs, even with insurance, may represent a substantial portion of an elderly individual's budget, necessitating careful financial planning (Thomas-Jones, 2020). This study holds paramount significance in addressing the evolving needs of an aging global population, particularly within urban contexts. With the demographic landscape shifting towards an increasingly elderly populace, understanding the intricate dynamics of their experiences in urban environments is imperative. The findings of this report will offer a comprehensive understanding of the benefits

and challenges faced by elderly residents, informing policy-makers, urban planners, and healthcare providers about the specific requirements of this demographic. By highlighting the advantages of urban living, such as access to healthcare and social engagement opportunities, and concurrently shedding light on obstacles like mobility constraints and housing affordability, this report aims to foster the development of age-friendly cities. Ultimately, the insights gleaned from this research endeavor aspire to pave the way for inclusive, sustainable, and supportive urban environments that optimize the well-being and inclusivity of elderly residents, thereby benefiting society as a whole. This study aims to study the multifaceted experiences of elderly residents in urban environments, assessing the advantages they gain and the obstacles they face, to inform policies that promote their well-being and inclusion in contemporary societies. On the basis of previous studies, the following objectives were formulated;

1. To comprehensively analyze the benefits that elderly residents derive from urban environments, including access to healthcare, social engagement opportunities, and cultural amenities.
2. To identify and evaluate the challenges faced by elderly residents in urban settings, encompassing issues related to mobility, accessibility, safety, housing, and social support networks.

II. METHOD

Participants

The sample of the study was elderly residents with age above than 50 years. The sample was selected from old age houses of Lahore. More than 40 elderly residents were selected by convenience sampling. About 62% participants belong to age group of 51 to 60 years, 26% belong to age group of 61 to 65 years. From all responses, 54% were male participants and 46% were female participants.

Measures

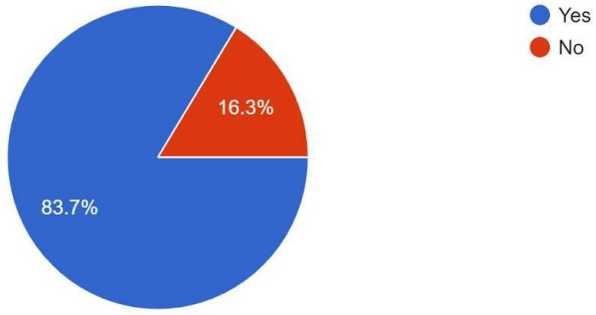
The researcher employed a self-constructed questionnaire to gather data from participants. This approach allowed for the customization of questions to specifically address the research objectives and ensure that the collected information was relevant and comprehensive. While self-constructed questionnaires offer flexibility, they also require careful development and validation to maintain reliability and validity. The researcher likely conducted a pilot study to assess the clarity and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire before administering it to the main sample.

Procedure

This study was conducted to know and analyze the benefits and challenges of elderly residents. This study is quantitative in nature and descriptive research design was used. The data is collected through a self-constructed questionnaire. Informed consent was taken from participants before the data collection. About 40 responses were collected and were used them later for statistical analysis. After the data collection, results were conducted and compiled statistically so that important findings could be suggested. The responses are given below in the form of pie charts, and graphs, and their results are mentioned as well.

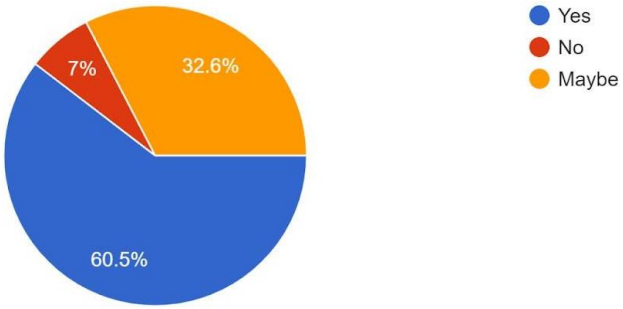
III. RESULTS

Figure 1: Impact on Well-Being



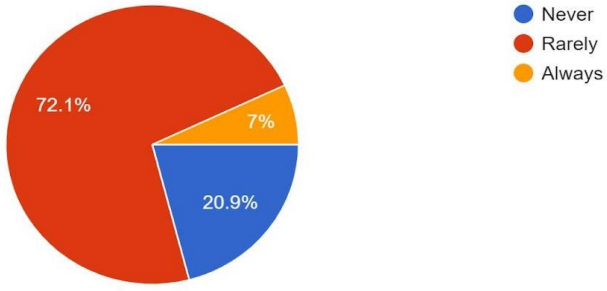
Almost 16% of respondents gave replies of negative impact on their well-being due to their fellows but the majority 84% gave in positive well-being.

Figure 2: Staff and Facilities



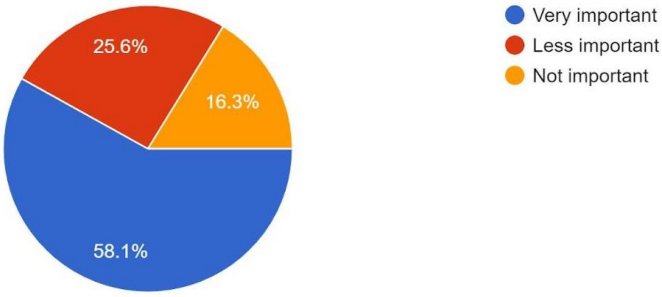
The majority 60.5% of all were satisfied with the professional attitude of the staff members.

Figure 3: Encountering Challenges



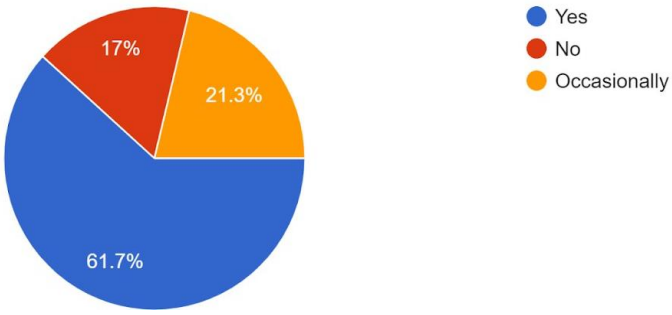
Almost majority 72% of people said that the center has a problem-solving approach with its residents while fewer were against this statement.

Figure 4: Social Support



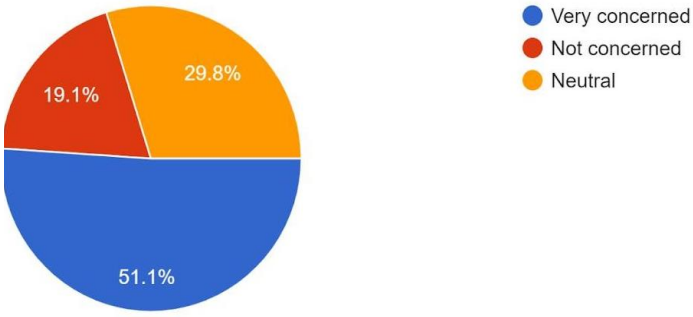
Near about majority 59% showed that their connection with their friends and family is important to them and they receive social support but 26% said it is less important to them.

Figure 5: Cultural Aspects



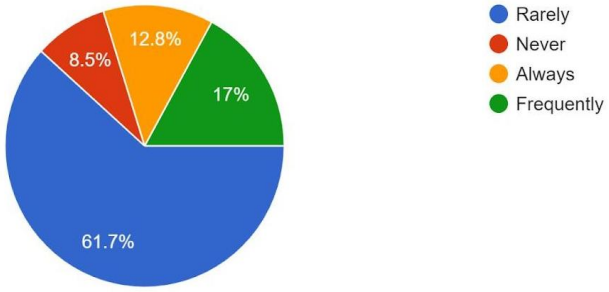
Almost majority 61% revealed that religious and cultural gatherings and events are celebrated on an occasional basis.

Figure 6: Economic Concerns



Almost majority 51.1% participants reported economic concern were very important to those living in this home.

Figure 7: Loneliness



Almost majority 61% answer about loneliness gives a message that irrespective to all facilities and caring majority feel alone here.

IV.DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher explored the current situation of how the challenges occur and their solution are searched in elder residents. Questionnaires were made and distributed among elderly residents, aged above 50. Overall, the findings from this study indicated the residents' attitudes toward new the atmosphere, their fellows, medical teams, and other facilities. Not surprisingly, most elder residents were satisfied. Mostly residents aged above 60 were good in their physical and mental health. The majority of elders were male residents and above age 65. The satisfaction rate of the residents among fellows was variable because 26% of people were satisfied and 43% were unsatisfied. There has been remarkable feedback about the positive well-being of the residents almost of 85% agree with it. On asking about any activity that keeps residents active mostly gave a positive reply. About 59% of responses showed satisfaction with the facilities that are provided in the old home. One thing that was alarming in old age homes was that there was an issue of mobility in 72%. From all respondents, it was known that 60% of people were comfortable while communicating with the medical team. From all the residents almost 62% were in loneliness.

During these responses, it was clear that most of the persons were satisfied with the medical facility, the staff of the home, and other assisting factors. But one thing was also noted the majority of old persons were in a state of loneliness and somewhat silent in their personality. It tells that mental well-being was not as satisfying as medical health. The response of the old person was also appreciated during the survey and the majority of them gave their suggestions also. Previous studies were also in line with the current findings and clearly revealed the challenges and issues of old age people (Kjølseth et al., 2009; Richardson et al., 2020). Numerous research on elder care and

issues that older people in both developed and developing nations confront have been carried out (Conrad et al., 2017; Saint-Jacques et al., 2016). These difficulties include family concerns, leisure activities, psychological health concerns, economic abuse, physical abuse, and problems with social well-being (Saeed & Shoaib, 2012; Shoaib et al., 2011). Though some elderly homes are offering them care, it is inadequate and unsatisfactory (Mbakile Mahlanza et al., 2015). The need for senior living facilities has increased in Pakistan and around the world as a result of the challenges faced by older people while trying to live alone or with their children (Akbar, 2021; Shoaib et al., 2012).

V. CONCLUSION

From the above responses, it is concluded that there must be some actions for the betterment of the residents of old homes. It is concluded that mental and psychological well-being needs some more effort whereas the living conditions and medical facilities are satisfying. There must be more convenient means of communication, transportation, and economic resources that can give better and brighter living to those old residents. Awareness programs and some seminars must be conducted for the resolving of hurdles that come to them. Government and NGOs must take part in formulating and amending the laws for these old citizens' residency. The study is limited to the elderly residents only. The study is only confined to the people above age of 50 years. The replies that are collected as a suggestion from all the respondents about the benefits and challenges of old age homes are listed below.

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