Investigation and psychological analysis of the elderly in nursing home

Mohammad Rahimi\textsuperscript{a}, Fatemeh Ghasemi\textsuperscript{b}, Mohammad-Amin Zare\textsuperscript{c}

\textsuperscript{a} Architecture M.A student in Islamic Azad University, Mahmud Abad branch, Mazandaran, Iran.
\textsuperscript{b} Instructor and lecturer in Faculty of architecture in Islamic Azad University, Mahmud Abad branch, Iran.
\textsuperscript{c} Instructor and lecturer in Faculty of architecture in Islamic Azad University, Mahmud Abad branch, Iran.

Abstract
One of the largest problems of the society is aging and provision of psychological needs of the elderly. In this study, we will investigate and analyze the psychology of the elderly in nursing homes; moreover creation of emotional connection and provision of psychological needs of the elderly’s lives will be considered. The aim of the present study is psychological analysis of the effect of living conditions in the nursing home compared to living in family environment and open social environment. First, the elderly needs, which are increasing with population growth, will be introduced. The signs and dangers which can affect the elderly’s quality of life will be indicated. Lack of sufficient facilities in rest home and elderly need for the family signifies the sense of high social relationship with his/her own living environment, a kind of sense that the senior person, in his living environment is having towards the nursing homes. Therefore, in order to prevent mental harm to elderly, some solutions such as appropriate physical activities, social relationships in order to reduce stress in elderly, family gathering and spiritual connection in nursing homes are offered.

Keywords: psychology, the elderly, nursing home, mentality, life.

Introduction:
During the biological process, human beings are facing a stage called elderliness. This stage achieved through normal growth, such that it is unavoidable characteristic in human life and it is an inevitable necessity (Firoozeh Moqadam and et.al, 2014). It is a period during which physical competencies are
reduced, some values and privileges are lost and in many other cases physical and mental weaknesses come along (Zabetian and Taqvaei, 2009).

With regard to mental and emotional dimension, elderliness means gradual deterioration of mentality which makes liveliness and gaiety, determination and decision, self-confidence, willingness to take a risk, sense of usefulness and belonging are reduced. Not a specific time can be estimated to set the beginning of agedness and the mentioned disorders; however it is claimed that mental deterioration starts from the time that the person feels he/she is a burden to others. In fact, it can be stated that when the person feels that no social role is assigned to him/her that’s the beginning of mental agedness (Saberi et al, 2003), which is accompanied by physiological changes. The changing process is equal to different people but the speed may differ. In fact, elderliness is reduction of mental and physical capability which occurs through the passage of time and is a natural process of changes related to time, starts from birth and continues through the whole life. The period after sixties is called elderliness. Thus it is considered as growth period (radiofarhang.ir). However, it should be considered that agedness is more than getting old. Agedness can occur slowly or fast, gradually or suddenly. It seems that some people enter elderliness step by step and gracefully, but other people become old all at once due to an adverse event, weather real or imaginary. No matter how it is coming, agedness is inevitable and happens to all (Rahmanian, 1985).

In general, aging is a phenomenon which occurs by biological, physiological, biochemical and anatomical changes in the body’s cells. These changes gradually affect on cell performance. Aging is not a simple downhill that all can descend in the same speed, rather it is a staircase with disorganized railings which some people can climb down with a speed faster than others (Majidi, 1989).

**Estimation of future of the elderly population**

As a result of Progression in medical science and increase in human life expectancy, the elderly especially in developed and industrious countries will form the majority of population (asayeshghaqom.com).

According to estimates, annually an average of about 5.2 per cent are added to the number of 65-year old people, but in spite of growth in the elderly population, still not enough attention has been paid to their needs (Hemati, Alamdaru et al., 2008). The world population aged over 60 years is estimated more than 605 million people worldwide and it is measured that by 2050 this number will reach 2 billion people (Shariati and Fazel Kalkhuran, 2013). In recent years, due to the development in technology and industry, medicine and health, advanced methods have been discovered to prevent the death of the children and even adults, and as a result the number of the elderly have been increased (Bastani and Zakariaei Seraji, 2012). However, assessment of aging according to global scale is a sensitive issue. West demographic estimates indicate that between the years 1970 and 2000, the number of elderly will double and at the end of the current century fifteen percent of people over age 65 will form the world’s population (Mansour, 2002). Today, aging has become a global phenomenon, because of the increase in life expectancy and health issues, according to World Health Organization statistics, the population of this group has increased (Peymanfar et al., 2012).
Reasons of increase in the number of elderly population can be summarized as follows:

1. Reduction in birth in a long run.
2. Migration of young work powers
4. Reduction of deaths related to the old age such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, etc. (Taqavi, 1995).

The elderly mental health needs

With proper planning, the elderly can enjoy a happy and productive old age, and can be treated as integrated parts within a community. Of those planning a variety of psychotherapy treatment can be noted. The goal of psychotherapy in elderliness is providing support, reducing anxiety and increasing socialization (Smith et al., 2008). Thus, mental and physical health provision of the elderly as a vulnerable group in society requires special attention (Hemati Alamdar, et. al 2008). The process of aging is variable in terms of culture. In simple and healthy cultures, the elderly longevity is dependent on a series of reasons. Status of the elderly in the society is high, the old person lives with his families, who respect him/her and consider him/her as a useful person for himself/herself and for the society. There is no forced abdication of activities and her/she can continue to work as long as he/she desires (niyaysh.blogfa.com). Since the developing countries still grapple with the problems of development, they don’t explore issues related to population aging. Therefore they do not make plans for the future and then face with population aging and difficulties resulting from that. In developing countries the speed population aging is rapid and compared with developed countries, takes less time for the elderly population to double. Therefore these countries will not be prepared to deal with the situation and a change in the socio-economic system will create many problems for them (Shmu, 2011). The elderly are the largest and the fastest agent factor in a society to increase hospital admission. These people have the highest risk in inability cognitive weakness (Karimi et al., 2013).

In general, the needs of the elderly can be divided as follows:

1. Emotional needs
2. Subsistence needs
3. The need for recreation
4. Need to participate in social life
5. The need for security (Zabetian and Taqvaei, 2009)

Warning signs of mental health during aging

The signs of aging are not natural components related to aging they may exhibit a condition:

1. Sad and depressed mood that lasts more than two weeks.
2. Recurring thoughts about death, dying or suicide.
3 - Loss of interest or pleasure in things or people that already made positive feelings.

4 - Unusual fatigue, lethargy and lack of energy and feeling.

5 - Irritability and frequent squabbles or aggression.

6 - Loss or gain more appetite and significant weight change.

7 - Change status of sleep, such as insomnia at the beginning or end of the night or excessive sleeps.

8 - Feeling of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt, disappointment or loneliness (niyaysh.blogfa.com).

Medical science with all its amazing advances in technology is still incapable of prevention and treatment of aging and its complications; psychology except for the recent years, has not considered the study of human behavior in elderliness and still compared to other stages of life no desirable attention is paid to aging and elderly (Shoari nejad 1996).

The elderly’s quality of life

Literally, quality of life means the level of enjoyment, comfort and health in someone's life. It is a broad, multi-dimensional concept which normally includes self-report of the person’s physical and mental health. In report about quality of life, those features are introduced which are valuable to the person and are the result of comfort feeling or the perception of having good feeling. It is towards development and maintain reasonable physical, emotional and rational functions, so that the person can maintain his/her ability in valuable life activities (vch.qums.ac.ir).

A new issue that arises today regarding the quality of life is life expectancy. Despite the fact that expectancy has been there since the beginning of human creation, the scientific study in human life has a short history and is in its childhood (Mansuri, 2008). According to increase in longevity index and addressing a more important issue as quality of life has attracted the attention of scholars and researches to the elderly. Quality of life is a basic index and since it includes numerous dimensions such as physiological aspects, function and the individual’s personality it needs a special attention (Sanaei et al., 2013).

Slowing down the process of conceptual and dynamic along with aging is known as the most revealing phenomenon in the field of psychology of aging. If there is no other obvious pathology due to psychosomatic disease, other cognitive functions in older adults will show slight changes. The elderly have certain emotional and psychological problems such as loneliness and lack of someone, the desire to attract the attention of people and ownership. If the elderly do not normally attract attention and affection of people they resort to behaviors such as malingering (Rezai and Manouchehri, 2008).

The most important issue that the elderly face, in terms of sociology, is the cultural difference between them and young generation which result to the increase the gap between those two generations and thus leads to the feeling of loneliness and seclusion among the elderly, and each of them condemn another to decline and misery, and because the elderly assume themselves to be more experienced in every way of life they expect to be more acceptable and if their expectations did not meet, naturally they would be upset and would complain (Shoari nejad,1996). Loneliness is sometimes described as individual’s
cognitive awareness of weakness in individual and social relationships that leads to the feelings of sadness, emptiness or regret and envy. In fact, loneliness, inability to establish and maintain a satisfying relationship with others which probably lead to experiencing a sense of exclusion (Mikaeili et al., 2012). Loneliness, as a negative experience and common problem among older people has been reported in the scientific community and research related to health. Evidence suggest that loneliness is a broad and widespread phenomenon which influence 25% to 50% of the whole population over age of 65 in terms of age and gender and the elderly are at higher risk of feeling lonely (Vlaming et al. 2010).

Social isolation is a condition in which the person or group has the desire or need to communicate with others but is not able to make this connection. However feeling lonely is an unwanted and undesirable condition occurring during the lack of a significant relationship. Research findings show that 75/43% of elderly people in nursing homes feel lonely. The elderly with 5 or more children living in the family environments have had a great feeling of loneliness which means that with the increase of the number of children feeling of loneliness will increase. A review of the literature on the elderly loneliness indicates that the source of many of unbalanced psychological states such as depression, suicide, severe disappointment has been loneliness (gtoap.com). Loneliness can be considered as shortcomings and weaknesses in interpersonal relationships which lead to the experience of social discontent (Milaeili et al., 2012). The problems associated to aging and approaching the reality of death may also drive them to the sense of meaningless in life. In a study conducted on the elderly in Finland, the most important cause of loneliness include illness(81%) , death of spouse (71%), lack of a friend (67%). However, the lack of meaningfulness in life is the most common reason for those old people who often or always feel lonely (Saviko, 2005). Lonely people involve with feeling of emptiness, sadness and insecurity and these in various ways affect social interaction with others, life style and physical and mental health (Henrich & Gullone, 2006).

Mental health in psychoanalytic theories

- Freud’s view (1856) on mental health:
  According to Freud particular characteristics are essential for psychological health, and self-awareness is the first feature. It means that the unconscious that may cause the problem should be conscious. Self-awareness is a key element of mental health. Though it is not sufficient for mental health. According to Freud, the ultimate criterion for mental health is rational alienation of favorites and from public passions. Freud believes that a conventional individual is one who has passed emotional-sexual growth successfully and has not stabilized in any of the stages. However Freud is considered less of a conventional and every individual is somehow in a way of conventionality (khoda Rahimi, 1994).

- The concept of mental health in psychological social and biological theory of Adler(1870):
  According to Adler, mental health means having clear goals in life, having a stable philosophy for living, good and stable family and social relationship, being useful for the fellows, courage and assertiveness, having control over the emotions and sensations, having the ultimate goal of perfection and self-realization, acceptance of mistakes and take possible efforts in resolving them(Khoda Rahimi 1994).

- Erikson’s theory about health:
  Unlike Freud who in his theories put too much emphasis on unconscious, Erikson believes a lot in age. He describes the status of mental health in relation to “I” and he describes its variables in relation to “I”. In general, Erikson maintains that with regard to mental health there are certain traits which distinguish a person having a mental health from the one who lacks it. He believes that these traits will be defined in
the society. Therefore a person living in the society and provided that he/she is in a healthy mental condition is devoid of conflict he/she is using dominant potential and capabilities, is skilled in his/her work, having infinite ingenuity and take feedback all through his/her career and finally have a clear an undeniable spiritual ideas about life process (Khoda Rahimi 1994).

- **Kurt Lewin’s theory (1890) about mental health:**
  Kurt Lewin is known among psychologists for his field theory. Lewin believes that field theory is not only restricted to a special domain, rather it encompasses concepts that variety of psychological facts can be displayed via that. However, his idea about mental health is that health and psychological maturation cause disassociation and differentiation of the individual and the psychological environment and create stability and solidity of boundaries related to the individual’s psychological system.
  Thus, healthy individual, from the psychological point of view of Lewin is the one who makes a distinction between himself and his psychological environment (Khoa Rahami 1994).

- **Carl Rogers’ (1902) theory on mental health:**
  According to Rogers the more a person is mentally healthy, the more he feels and experiences freewill and authority. For Rogers a healthy man is the one with no restriction in thought and action (Khoda Rahimi, 1994).

Recently, some psychologists have tried to depict an optimistic image of these periods. Much as they accept some of the problems and losses of aging, they believe that old age can pass with pleasure and as long as the person is actively participate in the surrounding environment; he/she can gain new experiences (niyaysh.blogfa.com).

The elderly need freshness and vitality in order to survive and stay healthy. Activates, sport and entertainment create a joyful and satisfying life for them. Entertainment and activities strengthen their confidence and liberate them from being unprofitable and feeling of insignificance. This will contribute in provision of the elderly mental health (Saberian et al., 2003).

**Rest home from the view of the elderly**
Unfortunately, the elderly have no positive feeling towards the rest homes. Generally they feel obliged to stay there and to them the environment is compulsion and force. Although some are living there for years, yet they haven’t accustomed to that and wait for a change so they can come out of there. Opinions are negative towards nursing houses. Too many of the elderly protest against this situation but their voices are not heard. The children are in power and wealth is in their disposal, they don’t care about mental satisfaction and difficult situation that their parents are living (Qaemi 1987). There are significant differences in terms of health status, life satisfaction and cognitive function between the elderly living in house and those who are living in nursing houses. Studies have shown a positive relationship between general self-efficacy of the elderly living in nursing home and successful adaptation with nursing home and also participation in planned activates in nursing home (Mikaeili et al., 2012).

Overall, the factors that cause the creation of nursing homes are as follows:
- Economic development in areas of job, housing, efficient income, rise of costs and consumption…
- Cultural changes result from changes in philosophy, values, customs and traditions, optimism and pessimism and…
- Social changes result from communication, relationships, moral standards, comfort, and welfare in urban living, sense of responsibility…
Family changes in the form of limited fertility systems, family planning, desire for peace and independence… (Siam, 2002).

**Elderly comfort**

In general, there are more disadvantages than advantages in nursing homes. No matter how bad the situation is, it is better that the elderly live in home conditions not nursing homes (Siam, 2002). The elderly depend too much on neighborhood, neighbors and their residential atmosphere. Therefore, the use of traditional neighborhood patterns and centralizing the services and interactions in residential contexts can help in better and more use of local areas. Also the environmental and physical changes must be so small that gradual so to avoid damage to the social context (Zabetian and Taqvaei, 2009).

Physical and social context that the elderly are living effects on social experience, mental health, growth and adaptability. The elderly often like to stay in their homes, where they have passed their adult years. They deeply depend on their house as a place reminiscent of past events, and they are attached to independence, private living, and network of friends, near and far neighbors. Moreover, the social protection that exists in family environments plays a powerful role on reducing stress, hence it strengthen the mental and physical health (Mishara and Robert 1988).

Unfortunately, today the dominant and inappropriate methods of communication with the elderly are nonverbal, gestures and short and brief sentences, which show well the extent of the elderly banishment, form the society. It is nice to know that numerous researches have proven that the presence of at least one senior person in the family can significantly help in maintaining a heathy family environment and even is a source if interest and encouragement for the young children. On the other hand as our man-made school, Islam, have advised: obedience to parents is obedience to Allah, disobedience to parents is disobedience to Allah. In other place it says: whoever pleases his parents has pleased Allah and whoever makes his parents furious has displeased Allah. But living with the elderly requires special moral characteristics. The effective factors in the elderly’s adjustment: 1. Preparation for elderly 2. Fixed notion before elderly. 3. Acceptance of elderly. 4. Physical helath.5. Social communication 6. Entertainment 7. Social, cultural issues 8. Family.

**Behavior of relatives and acquaintances**

If it is assumed that the elderly are experienced and skilled and they have experienced ups and downs in life and they can be regarded as a suitable model for the young generation, should be looked up to (gtoap.com). Therefore we can claim that addressing different dimensions of comfort and welfare of the elderly in nursing home including paying attention to rest and sufficient sleep, regular physical activities, participation in individual and group social activities, government and non-government supports, the possibility of using medical and psychological services, assist in acceptance of elderly and accompanying changes, adapting to new circumstances and inform about facing elderly, can bring a more desirable life quality and mental health(Mokhtari and Qasemi, 2011).

The place where the elderly live forms a very important dimension of life quality, comfort and mental health of him/her. The importance of the physical space and appearance of the location varies from person to person. However the most important of factors influencing mental health is that the person fells that he/she is passing the time in his/her own house. Many seniors during their late in life insist that they
live in their own homes and some of them openly declare that they want to die in their own homes (Vander Zanden 2009).

**Conclusion**

Many studies have compared the quality of life in elderly residents of nursing homes and private homes and unanimously they agree on the high quality of life for the ones who live in private homes (Mokhtari and Qasemi 2011).

Strategies of better living for better elderly

1. Reduce the anxiety and presentiment about elderly.

Anxiety and presentiment are the root of every disease, therefore in order to solve this you need to find the causes of that. For example consulting with a therapist or even talking to a friend about worrisome issues can lead to reduction of anxiety and presentiment. Actions as walking, playing, suitable entertainments, physical activities can gain peace and calmness.

2. Maintain social relationships during elderly

The support gained from social relationship with friends, family and colleagues helps in marinating mental health. Studied have shown that signs of Alzheimer will demonstrate late for those who have a good connection with family members, relatives an also social groups compared to the ones who are aloof and less involved with others. This it is recommended that the elderly keep these connections and participation in voluntary activities and different groups are helpful in that matter.

3. Have a positive attitude during elderly

Solving the problems and tolerating them will be easier if they are seen with a positive attitude and strengthen positive excitement. Think of good things in the world and spend time with those people or things that make you happy.

4. Strengthen your spiritual connection during elderly

Issues of spirituality and immaterial will make you feel good. Try to keep your relationship with Him, the source of eternal life and the One who we will come back to. Try to strengthen your religious or spiritual beliefs. These can help relieve loneliness, depression, anxiety in elderly or even a defense factor against problems and mental illnesses such as Alzheimer. Those individuals who have strong religious and spiritual beliefs will naturally feel more support and comfort.

5. Do not cut physical activities related to the elderly

Physical activities will strengthen mental activities and therefore it is very important all through the life. If you start taking exercise in youth, you will benefit a lot during your old age. Some of the benefits of
taking exercise are: fitness, more flexibility, improve status of balance, liveliness and,… try to enjoy your old life by maintaining your health condition in a balanced an reasonable level

6. Exercise the brain for a better elderly period

Just when you think you have accumulated intellect and wisdom, your brain is in inconsistency, in other words it fools you. For example you may not remember where you have parked your car,… of course some of these forgetful nesses are natural in elderly. Don’t forget that you have accumulated abundant subjective experiences, remember that your brain is like a muscle, use it in order to keep it strong. A way to keep the mind healthy is permanent study. Therefore participate in concerts, lectures, theaters and cinema.

7. Maintain the relationships

Having strong ties with family and friend has always been important and the importance will double with increase in age. Studies indicate that if social relationships are weak the risk of death will be four times bigger than the one who is surrounded by people whom offering affection and love. In fact, one of the important indicators of longevity and mental health is having reliable and supportive family members and friends. Do some voluntary actions in a school, library or charity institutions (niyaysh.blogfa.com).

In conclusion, we note that home is always the best place to spend elderly and it should be planned that the elderly spend this period with warm family environment and with their children(gtoap.com).

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