

## **Fear of Crime among Single Elderly Living Alone in Chandigarh**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Crime against elderly persons is increasing day by day at a very fast speed in India. Elderly persons are the easy target of murder, abuse, theft and hurt. The increasing crime rate has affected the life and mental health of the elderly to a large extent and those elderly who live alone in big houses are more afraid of their security. This paper explores the fear of crime among single elderly living alone and also focuses on the different types of crime related with elderly persons due to which the fear of crime is also increasing. For the purpose of analysis, a sample of 60 single elderly persons from the upper class chosen in Chandigarh. The respondents were selected using purposive sampling and snow ball method was used to collect the desired sample size. The present paper is based on both primary as well as secondary data. Primary data has been collected from structured interview schedule and for the secondary data, news related to crimes against the elderly have been collected and analyzed.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The population of elderly is increasing all over the world. India is no exception, where 1/8<sup>th</sup> of the total population of world is living. Advancement in medical science has increased longevity due to which the elderly population is getting high. The demographic change has questioned many challenges at different levels- individual and familial as well. Numbers of changes are taking place within the family.

India's population of elderly persons is rapidly growing. Ageing is a biological process which affects every class (whether high or lower), gender (whether male or female), place (whether urban or rural) and caste. Every individual learn the basic values from the family through the process of socialization. The entire life of an individual roams around the family system. A person is born and dies in the family. Besides this, protection and security is also provided by the family to its members. Role of elder members of the family and parents is foremost. Now days, structure and functions of the family are changing. Modernization and development have given birth to individualism. It has developed a gap between the elder people and young adults. This feeling of individualism has changed the structure and functions of the family. Earlier in traditional societies, elderly persons were enjoying a high status in the family and society. They were treated as head of the household. In our traditional societies, joint family was the place for elderly persons to live where they felt safety, protection and support from its young members. According to Central Statistical Organization (2006), Indian family system is the most supportive social institution which also provides social security to the elderly. But in the contemporary societies, life of elderly persons presents greater prospects new and unique challenges. Although individual have different experience related with aging as there are many factors- government policies, health, social and economic status which affects the process of aging. Young members of the family move to another place and settled down with their family by leaving their parents alone. Elderly persons face numerous problems after left behind by their children. The type of problem may differ on individual basis. Those elderly who live without spouse may face more problems than those with spouse.

In the coming decades not only the population would age but the living arrangements of elderly persons would also change. Elderly would either live in non-familial residential settings or alone. According to United Nation, 2005, there are 90 million elderly persons who live alone worldwide. The number has been increased in the majority of places in last 10 years (United Nations, 2005). This trend of living alone is likely to continue and will affect the social system, especially for women, who are more likely to live alone as they outlive their spouses.

Elderly persons face problems related with health, finance, mobility, lack of support, loneliness and isolation etc. Fear of crime among elderly is a recent and the most emerging issue which has made life of elderly more problematic. The fear of crime and threat to personal security is the cause of concern among single elderly living alone. It has been reported that elderly persons who live alone often fall victim to robberies, burglaries, assault and fraud. According to the National Crime Records Bureau's report (2010), the crime related to elderly is increasing all over India.

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All single elderly do not constitute a homogeneous category. A fundamental question that remains unexplored in this area of research is that single elderly are different from married elderly. There is paucity of research despite an increasing recognition of diversity in aging. In the present study, the focus is on elderly single persons from the upper class of the society who were living alone. In the present context, word 'single elderly' includes: Widowed, Divorced and Never married.

### **Defining Elderly**

Many terms are used to explain people considered elderly. Some gerontologists have objected to use the terms 'elderly' and 'senior citizen' as insufficient for the generalizations that indicate negative stereotypes, including social isolation, impairment, and physical and financial dependence. The United Nations considers those who are above the age of 65 years as elderly. The Indian Census classifies people in the age range of 60 years and above as elderly. Indian demographers while studying the demographic and socio-economic aspects of elderly have used the proportion of persons of age 60 years and above as an indicator of ageing.

### **Fear of Crime**

According to Ferraro and LaGrange (1987), "fear of crime is an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime that a person associates with crime." The term *fear* relates with a jumble variety of feelings, viewpoints and the risks related with crime. In layman language, it can be said that fear is feeling. *Fear of crime* can be the fear to become victim of any crime. The feeling of fear does not produce any general perception on crime in society but develops a threat in someone.

According to Gert (2012), the state of fear of crime is **multidimensional** in nature. It consists perception of an individual, a corresponding affective experience and suitable purpose or action tendency.

### **Elderly related Crime**

Census of India (2011), shows that there were 31.3 percent households who have at least one elderly person out of nearly 250 million households. Out of these 31.3 percent households, almost 70 percent of the households have elderly living alone.

According to NCRB, there were 20,532 cases of crimes against elderly persons were reported in 2015, as compared to 18,714 in 2014. This data show increase in cases of crimes against elderly persons. Data also reveal that around 11 lakh Delhi residents are above the age of 60 years, out of which over 1 lakh live alone.

According to Nalla et al., (2011), the level of fear of crime is low among the middle class communities than higher class. The study reveals that economic growth of India has brought many problems. Change in population growth, migration and rising crime are the results of Urbanization and modernization. Therefore, the feeling of fear of crime among elderly persons is growing. A number of studies have been done related to crime against the elderly and elder abuse in India (Gupta & Chaudhuri, 2008; Patel, 2010; Thilagaraj and Priyamvada, 2003).

According to the National Crime Records Bureau's report (2010), it was reported that 32496 elderly have been murdered and 5836 cases of not amounting to murder and kidnapping all over India in last decade.

Group for Economic and Social Studies (2009) reported different types of crime that are committed against the elderly in four metropolitan cities of India. These crimes may be defined as crime against the body (murder, attempt to murder, hurt and kidnapping etc.), crime against the property (dacoity, robbery, burglary and theft) and economic crime (cheating, criminal breach of trust etc.). Such incidences of crime against elderly have increased the fear of crime among the elderly.

These above mentioned studies highlight causes and consequences of crime and abuse against the elderly which directly or indirectly reveal fear of crime among them. From the literature, there is a research gap which requires a scientific enquiry to analyze the issue of fear of crime among elderly from multiple perspectives and explore the factors affecting fear of crime among the elderly in India. The present study highlights fear of crime among single elderly.

### **Objectives**

- To find out the profile of the single elderly persons.
- To highlight fear of crime among single elderly persons living alone.
- To highlight the types of crimes among single elderly persons.
- To explore the safety measure used by the single elderly persons.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Research design

There are different kinds of research designs. They vary from general and sketchy statement of intent to carefully detailed and highly complex investigations. The research design for the present study is partly exploratory and partly descriptive.

### Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for the present study was single elderly in the age group of 60 years and above (widowed, never married and divorced) who are living alone in Chandigarh.

### Universe and Sampling

For the present study the universe is single elderly from the upper class of the society who were living alone without any family member. However, the present study is limited to Chandigarh. Due to lack of sampling frame, it was decided to take a purposive sample of 60 respondents with the help of snow ball method. The respondents belonged to three different categories i.e. widowed, divorced and never married. The number of respondents in the present study was 60.

Chandigarh, being a planned city has a housing pattern which clearly demarcated. The living arrangement ranges from one room set to large boundaries. For the purpose of study it was decided to draw sample on the basis of house type to make a desired sample size of upper class. Upper class stood for those who were living in the houses having five or more rooms (1Kanal or more than 1Kanal).

### Techniques of data collection

There are different methods of data collection in social research and to ensure the reliability of the data, suitable tools have to be devised. Keeping in mind the objectives of the present study, it was decided to collect primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected with the help of Interview schedule. Secondary data was collected from news in various newspaper on crime related with elderly living alone. Secondary data will give an extent and magnitude of the problem.

The structured interview schedule was divided into various parts which included questions on the profile of the respondents and fear of crime among single elderly living alone.

### Tabulation and analysis

After collecting all the information, a code design was prepared. The collected data was transferred into code design and then on to the EXCEL sheets. With the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), simple frequency tables and cross tables were made. After the analysis and interpretation of the study, the results were compared with the studies.

## III. Results

### Profile of the respondents

Mishra and Patel (2013) have found that the elderly in the 61-70 year age category have been victimized the most. According to them, more incidents of crimes have been reported against male elderly as compared to female elderly i.e. 53.5 percent. It was also found that more incidents of crimes reported against the urban elderly i.e. 58.2 percent. Crime rate is increasing day by day. An attempt has been made to find out the profile of the respondents.

Table no. 1: Distribution showing profile of the respondents

Response	No.	%
<b>Age</b>		
60-70	24	40.0
70-80	24	40.0
80+	12	20.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	27	45.0
Female	33	55.0
<b>Caste</b>		
Reserved	13	21.7
Unreserved	47	78.3
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindus	24	40.0
Muslims	8	13.3
Sikhs	26	43.3
Christians	2	3.3
<b>Background</b>		

Rural	16	26.7
Urban	44	73.3
<b>Marital status</b>		
Widowed	18	30.0
Divorced	22	36.7
Unmarried	20	33.3
<b>Educational background</b>		
High school	6	10.0
Graduation	16	26.7
<b>Post Graduation</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53.3</b>
Ph.D.	6	10.0
<b>Occupational background</b>		
<b>Government</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>53.3</b>
Private	12	20.0
Not working	16	26.7
<b>Income</b>		
20,000-30,000	22	36.7
30,000-40,000	22	36.7
40,000	16	26.7
<b>Reasons for living alone</b>		
Death of the spouse	17	28.3
Parents expired	13	21.7
Children live outside the city	7	11.7
Personal choice	23	38.3
<b>Duration of living alone (in years)</b>		
<10	19	31.7
10-20	19	31.7
20>	22	36.7

Table 1 show that there were 40 percent respondents each in the age group of 60-70 years and 70-80 years. There were 20 percent respondents who were in the age group of 80 years and above. In the present study there were more female elderly i.e. 55 percent as compared to 45 percent male elderly respondents. A majority of the respondents i.e. 78.3 percent respondents were from unreserved caste background and 21.7 percent respondents were from reserved caste background. It was found that most of the respondents were from Sikh religion i.e. 43.3 percent followed by 40 percent who belonged to Hindu religion, 13.3 percent belonged to Muslim religion and 3.3 percent respondents were Christians. Highest number of the respondents was from the urban background i.e. 73.3 percent whereas 26.7 percent were from the rural background. The data show that there were 36.7 percent respondents were divorced, 33.3 percent respondents were unmarried and 30 percent respondents were widowed. In educational qualification, there were 53.3 percent respondents who have done Post Graduation, 26.7 percent respondents have done Graduation, the number of respondents who have done High Schooling and Ph.D. was equal i.e. 10 percent each. Higher number of the respondents was engaged in Government sectors for occupation i.e. 53.3 percent against 20 percent respondents in Private sectors. There were 26.7 percent respondents were not engaged in any work.

Those respondents who were getting income in between Rs. 20,000-30,000 per month and Rs. 30,000-40,000 per month were equal i.e. 36.7 percent respondents in each. Further, there were 26.7 percent respondents who were getting income more than Rs. 40,000 per month.

The data show that personal choice was reported as the major reason for living alone by 38.3 percent respondents. 28.3 percent respondents have reported that they were living alone due to death of the spouse. 21.7 percent respondents have reported that they were earlier living with their parents but after the death of their parents they have to live alone. There were 11.7 percent respondents who reported that their children were living outside the city so they have to live alone.

There were 36.7 percent respondents who were living alone for more than 20 years. Those respondents who were living alone for less than 10 years and 10-20 years were equal (i.e. 31.7 percent each).

### **Fear related Crime among respondents**

Fear of crime and threat to personal security is the cause of concern among elderly who are single and living alone. It has been reported that very often that elderly persons living alone fall victim to robberies, burglaries, assault and fraud. According to National Crime Record Bureau data, a total of 20,532 cases of crimes against elderly were recorded in 2015, compared to 18,714 in 2014. This shows an increase in the crime rate against elderly persons. Thus, an attempt has been made in the present study to find out the fear of crime among single elderly living alone.

**Table no. 2: Distribution showing Fear related crime among respondents**

Response	No.	%
<b>Awareness about increasing crime</b>		
Yes	57	95.0
No	3	5.0
<b>Safe to live alone</b>		
Yes	9	15.0
No	51	85.0
<b>Fear of safety</b>		
Yes	55	91.7
No	5	8.3
<b>Safety measures</b>		
Nothing	25	41.7
Having Guard	18	30.0
Security system	17	28.3
<b>Check Door lock again and again</b>		
Yes	49	81.7
No	11	18.3
<b>Awareness about Police helpline number</b>		
Yes	45	75.0
No	15	25.0
<b>Used helpline number</b>		
Yes	6	10.0
No	39	65.0
Not applicable*	15	25.0
<b>Reason for using helpline number</b>		
Safety issue	5	8.3
Problem with tenants	1	1.7
Not applicable*	54	90.0
<b>Response of the police</b>		
Good	2	3.3
Bad	4	6.7
Not applicable*	54	90.0

Table 2 shows that a majority of the respondents (i.e. 95 percent) have reported that they were aware about increasing crime related to elderly. A majority of the respondents (85 percent) have reported that it is not safe to live alone as they live in big houses. 91.7 percent respondents have reported that they have fear of their safety as they live alone in house. On the further analysis it was found that most of the respondents who had fear for their safety were divorced elderly respondents.

For the safety purpose, 30 percent respondents have guards and 28.3 percent respondents have security system at their house. 41.7 percent respondents have left their faith on God and do nothing for their safety. The data show that 81.7 percent respondents check their house door again and again whether locked or not. Checking door again and again shows that they have some kind of fear of crime being living alone in big houses. They were aware that elderly living alone are mostly targeted for robbery.

For the security of the senior citizens Police helpline number for Chandigarh is #1090. 75 percent respondents have reported that they were aware about the police helpline number, out of which 10 percent respondents used this helpline number. On the further analysis it was found that most of the respondents who were not aware about police helpline number for the security of elderly were from the age group of 80 years and above.

It was found that 8.3 percent respondents used helpline number because they had some safety issues and 1.7 percent respondents had problems with their tenants as these respondents live alone in the house. There were 3.3 percent respondents who reported that the response of the police was good, 6.7 percent respondents reported bad response of the police.

#### **Analysis of News on elderly related crime from newspapers**

Elderly crime rate is increasing day by day. For the purpose of the present study, news on elderly related crime has been analyzed from the various newspapers.

1. News in *Dainik Jagran (2012)* on '*An elderly couple strangled at Home*' shows that an elderly couple was murdered after robbery at the home in Roorkee.
2. News in *Dainik Jagran (2012)* on '*Elderly has been murdered by Son with Sharp object*' shows that the crime against elderly where an elderly was killed by his son with a sharp object in Uttar Pradesh.
3. News in *Times of India (2012)* on '*Elderly woman found strangled at Home*' shows that there are few cases of crime related to elderly has been registered. Elderly women were murdered after robbery in their homes in Lucknow. It was found that these elderly women were living alone in their homes.

4. News in *Times of India (2017)* on **‘Elderly woman who lived alone murdered in Sushant Lok’** reveals that an elderly female has been murdered, in a case of suspected robbery. This news has put the security of the city's senior citizens in the spotlight. The victim was living alone in a building as her only son lives with his family in the USA.

5. News in *Times of India (2017)* on **‘Elderly woman living alone killed in West Delhi’** shows insecurity being living alone of elderly persons. A 70-year-old woman was stabbed multiple times with an ice pick and her head smashed against a wall in her house. The woman lived alone after the deaths of her husband and son a few years ago. While the woman's clothes were torn, police ruled out a sexual assault after a medical examination. A few articles from the house were, however, missing, so the cops are investigating if robbery was the motive for the crime. The news reveals sexual assault and robbery were motive of crime.

6. News in *India Today (2017)* on **‘No city for old men and women: In Delhi, an alarming increase in crimes against senior citizens’** shows that in 2015, till September, 82 cases related to crime against senior citizens have been registered. News shows that a septuagenarian couple was killed by a drug addict at their residence Five days later, a 70-year-old woman was found brutally killed in West Delhi's Khyala area. News also reveals that robbery is the most common crime against elderly. In most cases, either a senior citizen or elderly couples who live alone were targeted. The criminals found them to be more vulnerable than others.

7. News in *Times of India (2018)* on **‘Elderly couple killed by burglars’** shows that an elderly couple were killed by unidentified burglars. Crime took place with the intention of robbery.

8. News in *Times of India (2018)* on **‘Elderly woman killed, ring, bangles missing’** shows that living alone is unsafe for elderly persons. An 80-year-old woman, who was living alone in her house was found murdered. Police suspect it to be a murder for loot, as gold jewellery, including a gold ring and bangles, were found missing from the body.

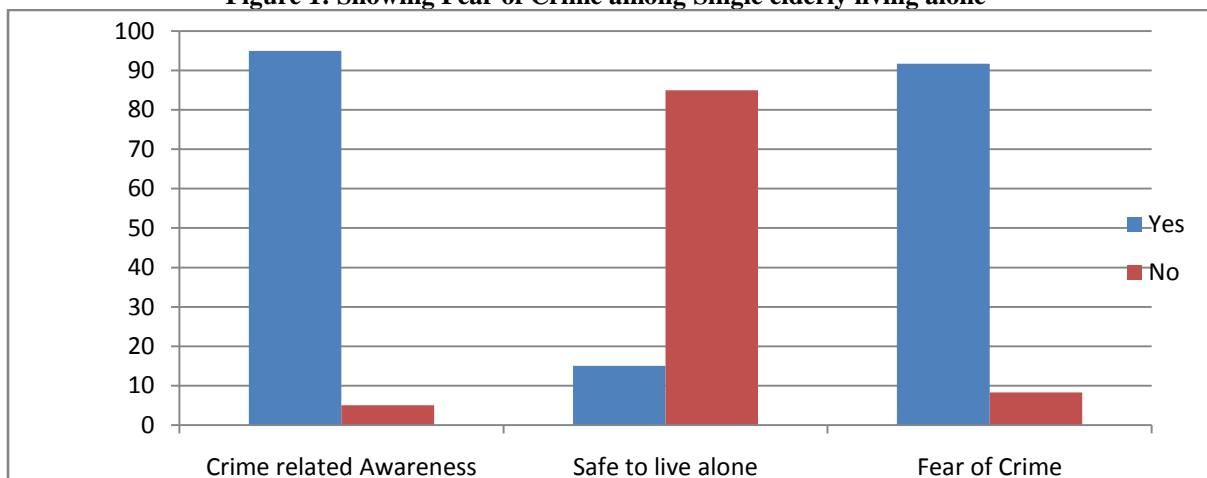
9. News in *Times of India (2019)* on **‘Elderly couple brutally killed in Bansdroni home’** shows that an elderly couple who was living alone in the house since 1970’s were killed in home for cash and property.

All the above mentioned news in various newspapers show that crime against elderly persons is increasing day by day. Most of the victims are those elderly persons who were living alone in the house. A majority of the crimes have been taken place with the intention of robbery followed by property. Elderly persons are easily targeted for the robbery and crime especially those elderly who are living alone.

**Major findings**

- The data in the following figure 1 show that a majority of the elderly living alone in the big house are having fear of crime. There were 95 percent respondents who were aware about increasing crime against elderly persons. A majority of the respondents (i.e. 85 percent) reported that it is not safe to live alone and there were 91.7 percent respondents who reported that they had fear of crime related with elderly which is increasing day by day.

**Figure 1: Showing Fear of Crime among Single elderly living alone**



- A majority of the respondents (i.e. 41.7 percent) reported that they don't use any safety measure for their safety and left their faith on God. 30 percent respondents had Guard and 28.3 percent had Security system set up at their home. Results show that keeping Guard and installation Security system was opted as safety measures by the respondents.

Figure 2: Showing Safety measures used by elderly to cope with the problem of crime



- Secondary data from the various newspapers highlights that most of the crimes against elderly were related with Robbery followed by property and murder. For the loot and robbery many elderly persons who live alone are brutally left in the pool of blood, smothered to death by pillow. It was also found that especially elderly women living alone were targeted from crime.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Information was collected from 60 single elderly persons from the upper class living alone in Chandigarh having rural and urban background. The aim of the study was to highlight the fear of crime among single elderly persons living alone in Chandigarh. The study also investigates the profile of the respondents. The findings of the present study show that respondents belonged to the different socio-economic groups of the society. There were equal number of respondents in the age group of 60-70 years and 70-80 years (i.e. 40 percent each). Mishra and Patel (2013) have found that the elderly in the 61-70 year age category have been victimized the most. Highest number of the respondents (i.e. 55 percent) was of females. A large number of the respondents were belonging to the unreserved caste background and highest number of the respondents was Sikhs (i.e. 43.3 percent). There were more divorced respondents in the present study followed by unmarried and widowed respondents.

A majority of the respondents were from urban background (i.e. 73.3 percent). Those respondents who have done Post Graduation were more in the present study. Highest number of the respondents did government jobs. In the economic background of the respondents, it was found that more respondents were getting income more than Rs. 30,000 per month. It was found that Personal choice was major reason for living alone and highest number of the respondents was living alone for more than 20 years (i.e. 36.7 percent).

A majority of the respondents had fear for their safety and it was also reported by a majority of the respondents that living alone is not safe. Results from Secondary data show that living alone is the major cause of the fear of crime among single elderly. To cope with their safety issues, 30 percent respondents have hired security guard and 28.3 percent respondents have set up a security system at their houses.

India is growing old. Life expectancy is increasing with the advancement in medical science and so do the number of elderly living alone is increasing. Living alone in old age is a modern phenomenon which has taken place in Indian family set up. The family plays an important role and function in human life. The entire life of an individual is completed within the family structure (a person born in the family, socialize in family, got protection and security in the family and die in the family). Now days, structure and functions of the family are changing. Modernization and development have given birth to individualism. This feeling of individualism has change the structure and functions of the family. Earlier in traditional societies, elderly persons were enjoying a high status in the family and society. They were treated as head of the household. In our traditional societies, joint family was the place for elderly persons to live where they felt safety, protection and support from its young members. According to Central Statistical Organization (2006), Indian family system is the most supportive social institution which also provides social security to the elderly persons.

Security of the elderly is important and prior function of the family. Though, this security has been the responsibility of family members. In traditional India family elderly were taken cared by their children but in the

modern societies elderly persons are mainly alone at home. The main reason for living alone of elderly includes decreasing family size, two-career family and increased life expectancy etc. In addition, geographical mobility, limited economic capacity and change in attitude about family obligations influence family support and involvement in the lives of individual residing in elderly home (Dannefer and Phillipson 2010, 35.)

There are many factors which are responsible for limiting the family size such as education, migration, urbanization, individualism, changing patterns of filial support and more employment opportunities in the cities and outside the country. As children get settled abroad or have moved to nuclear families, the elderly parents have to manage things on their own and forced to live alone in old age. Deteriorating health conditions and the security of the elderly are the major concern. In addition to these concerns living alone in big houses itself lead to fear of crime among elderly persons. Thus, it can be concluded that the changing patterns in the family system are responsible for the increasing crime and fear of crime among single elderly living alone.

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