CHAPTER-5
DISCUSSION

This study examined differences in the positive subjective experiences of happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope between the pre-retired, retired and post-retired aging respondents. The results indicate that the three groups maintain similar levels of positive subjective experiences without any significant difference.

**Verbatim statements of some of the respondents (R) about positive subjective experiences (happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope)**

**R 1:** A married pre-retired female aged 59 years living with spouse said –

“In fact, compared to what I was before, I am much more calm and patient now. I now take decisions independently. Earlier I used to get mad and lose temper.” (Translated in English).

“My mother said that age starts after retirement, before retirement people are young.” (Translated in English)

**R 2:** A married pre-retired female aged 56 years living with spouse said –

Life is worth living!

“There is no problem for which a solution does not exist. I always try to find solution and different ways.” (Translated in English)

On being asked, ‘If something can go wrong for you, will it?’ she replied- “why? I can change it. Destiny is not fixed and I can change it.”

**R 3:** An unmarried pre-retired female aged 59 years living with relatives said-

“I experience happiness every moment. I get up at 4 am and sleep at 11 pm. I don’t like to sit idle. I feel physically fit.” (Translated in English)

**R 4:** A married retired female aged 65 years living with spouse said-

“Nobody ever gets old. Everybody says I am still young.” (Translated in English)
R 5: A married retired female aged 62 years living with spouse said-
“I cannot say what will happen next as I age. But I am hopeful.” (Translated in English)

“With age things are getting better. My children are also getting settled in their lives.”
(Translated in English)

R 6: A married retired female aged 63 years living with spouse said-
“One has to search for happiness after retirement. If I make someone happy, I get extra blood, more life.” (Translated in English)

R 7: A married post retired male aged 76 years living with spouse said-
“In many ways I am better and happier than others.”

“I am a Jawan of the Indian Army and a Jawan never feels old.”

“I don’t lose my patience normally.”

R 8: A married post retired male aged 78 years living with spouse said-
“Whatever I do, I do it with happiness.”

“I am always optimistic about my future!”

R 9: A married post retired female aged 73 years living with spouse said-
“I maintain positive thinking. If something wrong happens today, tomorrow will definitely bring good news.” (Translated in English)

“If He (God) closes one door, He also opens new doors for us.” (Translated in English)

R 10: A widowed post retired female aged 72 years living alone -
“I have no goals now” (absence of agency and pathway thinking) (Translated in English)

R 11: An unmarried post retired female aged 76 years living with family relatives (siblings and brother-in-law) said-
“Some solution or the other will be available. There is no problem for which there is no solution.” (Translated in English)
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**R 12:** A widow post retired female aged 80 years living with her unmarried daughter said-

“I do not feel old or tired, not until my death.” (Translated in English)

“I am fit and fine. I am 80 years and still working. As a doctor, I had always served others. I am ever young.” (Translated in English)

My close friends and colleagues are in Chicago and we are planning to meet on 2\textsuperscript{nd} December 2012 in Indore. We are friends from 11\textsuperscript{th} class and continued friendship till medical degree. I have called all my batch mates and we will get together for lunch. Even my friends adjust to my good and bad points. I don’t know if I will be alive until 2\textsuperscript{nd} December, but I am planning for the get together.” (Translated in English)

“I never say I am tired. I will never say.” (Translated in English)

“Worry is useless.” (Translated in English)

**R 13:** A post retired female aged 75 years living with spouse

“We have to be hopeful to live” (Translated in English)

On being asked, ‘*Can you think of many ways to get the things in life which are important to you?*’, she replied “No, it is not possible now. How do I?” (Translated in English)

The study found no statistically significant difference on the four dimensions of positive subjective experiences, with the exception of ‘pathways’. It has been revealed that the respondents in the pre-retired group have the highest mean score on pathway, followed by the respondents in the retired and the post retired group (in decreasing order). The respondents in the pre-retired group, compared to the retired and post retired group, displayed greater confidence in identifying goals and finding alternative routes when obstacles are encountered. It has been found that even though the three groups of pre-retired, retired and post retired aging respondents have almost similar levels of agency (will power) which provides them the energy and determination to persist in the pursuit of personally important goals, the pathway (way power) is significantly different for the aging respondents across age and working status (Table 9). This finding is consistent with the results of a study conducted by Snyder and Bailey (2007) on the basis of which they observed an inverse relationship between age and scores on the trait hope scale, particularly on “pathway thinking”. Snyder
explains this trend using the concept of “psychological recession”. According to this concept, increasing age, health problems and availability of resources for retirement occupy individual’s attention and effort and consequently goal directed thinking may suffer. In addition, Hussain, Arya and Imam (1998) also reported comparable results in their study. They observed that pre-retired (56-60 years) subjects expressed higher tendency of goal seeking, which may be related to Snyder’s construct of hope that focuses more on expectations relating to the attainment of goals.

With the exception of life satisfaction of pre-retired males and females (Table 13), the findings of this study indicate no significant difference in the positive subjective experiences of happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope on the basis of gender of the respondents. This finding is consistent with what Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) discovered during the construction and validation of the subjective happiness scale. They found no significant gender or age related differences between the student sample, adult community sample and the older retired sample. Conversely, these findings are contradictory to studies conducted in the past on the Indian sample which indicate that aged males are better on life satisfaction compared to their female counterparts (Chadha, 1991) and age and life satisfaction are negatively correlated (Mathew, 1997).

A high t value, though insignificant, shows trend of high level of optimism in aging male respondents compared to their female counterparts (Table 12). In the pre-retired group, a significant difference was observed on the dimension of life satisfaction between the pre-retired male aging respondents and the pre-retired female aging respondents (Table 13). Amusingly, the aging females in the pre-retired group were found high on life satisfaction compared to their male equivalents. Besides, a high t value, though insignificant, shows trend of high level of combined positive subjective experiences (happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope) of the aging females compared to aging male in the pre-retired group. Interestingly, the aging females of the pre-retired group were noticed to have higher mean scores on all the four dimensions of happiness, life satisfaction, hope and sub-scales of hope, excluding optimism (Table 13).
With respect to the remaining two groups of the retired and post retired, no significant differences were observed between the male and female aging respondents on the dimensions of positive subjective experiences (Table 14 and Table 15). A high t value, although insignificant, on the sub-scale pathway indicate trends of high level of pathway in the case of retired aging female respondents (Table 14) whereas it indicates low pathway in case of post retired aging females (Table 15). For this reason it may be suggested that as women age from retirement to post retirement phase of their lives, they are less able to identify goals and find alternative routes when the path is blocked. Aging as a process is likely to descend pathway goal directed thinking.

Verbatim statements of some of the respondents (R) about social support

R 1: A Pre- retired married male aged 58 years living with family said-

“My family is my inner circle, my first circle.”

On being asked, ‘Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and best points?’, the respondent replied, ‘My wife, she has no choice (smiles)’.

R 2: A retired married male aged 62 years living with spouse said-

“My wife had cancer and she still took care of me. She would cook for me. I will give my property to my wife only because the support I get from her is matchless. She will be my first priority.” (Translated in English)

R 3: A retired married female aged 65 years living with spouse said-

“With age, husband-wife relationships also matures and so we get our own space.” (Translated in English)

“My support comes from home first and then from friends.” (Translated in English)

R 4: A retired married female aged 63 years living with spouse said-

“I had great time with my colleagues, school Principal and friends. I enjoyed 36 years of my service as a teacher. But after retirement, everybody is home and busy with their lives. Now I only have my husband.” (Translated in English)
R 5: A married post retired male aged 75 years living with spouse said-
“Only my wife can accept me with my worst and best points, who else would do that?” (Translated in English)

R 6: A married post retired male aged 76 years living with spouse said-
“I depend on my son after I seek support from my wife.” (Translated in English)

R 7: A widower post retired male aged 77 years living with son said-
“I regularly go for morning and evening walk with my friends. From 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm we discuss and debate.” (His fellow friend is also widower and both like each other’s company).

The respondent lives with his son who was observed to wear heavy tattoos, gel in hairs, sunglasses inside the house and short clothes. The respondent disliked his attitude towards life and shared many experiences from his past where he was respected as an individual, something which he does not receive from his son. He shared the memory of his father and how he learned lessons of resilience and personal sacrifice from him. He said, “I try my best to make things work because of his (father’s) learning’s”. Also, during the conversation he shared an old letter which one of his students had posted him. The letter continues to be a precious souvenir which he keeps very safe and reads whenever he is low.

R 8: A married post retired female aged 80 years living with family said-
“My daughter-in-law has always supported me, she is very caring.”(Translated in English)

R 9: A married post retired female aged 73 years living with spouse -
The respondent said that she blindly trust God and has immense faith in Him. Also, she attends three satsangs (religious group) thrice a week. She revealed that she counts on God to feel better whenever she feels down-in-the-dumps.

R 10: A widowed post retired female aged 72 years living alone said -
“The only time I was depressed was when my husband passed away when I was 30 years of age. Without him life was difficult. Without a man, a woman is incomplete.
But my family gave me a good environment. My father-in-law gave me his property!”
(Translated in English)

“My family cares a lot about me and is very concerned for me. My children have
provided me with servants for all works. They don’t let me try anything. But I still
want to work in this age and be independent.” (Translated in English)

**R 11:** An unmarried post retired female aged 76 years living with family relatives
(siblings and brother-in-law)

The respondent was living with her married sister and widower brother. Since all three
members of the house were of the same age group, they were observed to share their
problems with each other. There was similarity in the nature of their problems and interests.
Furthermore, other forms of social support were also available from her sister’s children
who were in medical profession and helped in during times of medical need.

**R 12:** A widow post retired female aged 80 years living with her unmarried daughter said-
“There is no other support like that of spouse. I really miss him. He was my biggest
support.” (Translated in English)

**R 13:** A married post retired female aged 76 years living with family said-
“Attending *satsang* (religious group) everyday gives me immense strength. People in
the *satsang* are like an extended family. God is always with you. External help is
always there.” (Translated in English)

“I enjoy my grandchildren.” (Translated in English)

**R 14:** A widow post retired female aged 80 years living with children said-
“I get a regular pension of Rs. 25,000/ and keep giving it to my grandchildren. I make
donations and also buy gifts for my daughter-in-law. I have this whole house to
myself.” (Translated in English)

**R 15:** A married post retired female aged 75 years living with family said-
“I am not dependent economically on anybody but I need emotional support.. (sad
face and wet eyes)” (Translated in English)

“As such I do not need any help but I need emotional support...(cried)” (Translated in
English)
The respondent broke down during the conversation and cried heavily. Her husband who is the only emotional support was severely ill and she was single handedly taking care of him. Her son and daughter-in-law (according to the neighbors and friends) are inconsiderate towards her and her ailing husband. She shares a positive relationship with her daughter who is with her at every stage. Also, she has one friend who lives in America and calls her once a month and visits her once in two years.

The study was also intended to find out the social support of the aging respondents with respect to their working status and gender. It has been found that the pre-retired, retired and post retired aging respondents have similar structural (number of persons) and functional (level of satisfaction) social support across age (Table 16). It implies that there is no significant difference in the size of the social network and the level of satisfaction derived from them for the aging respondents, irrespective of their working status and age. This finding is inconsistent with another study that found inverse relationship age and size of the social network (Cornwell et al, 2008).

With respect to the purpose of finding difference on the structural and functional dimension of social support between male and female aging respondents, the findings indicate no significant difference (Table 17). Both the male and female aging respondents have been found to have similar size of the social network in terms of the number of persons depended upon and the level of satisfaction derived from them. However, a high t value, though insignificant, indicate trends on structural and functional social support in the pre-retired and retired group of aging respondents (Table 18 and 19), respectively. A high, though insignificant t value, shows the trend of a wider social network of aging females in the pre-retired group (Table 18). It shows that females who are pre-retired and about to retire have more number of persons in their social network compared to their male counterparts. On the other hand, trends show that aging males in the retired group are more satisfied from their social network compared to retired females as indicated by a high t value, although insignificant statistically (Table 19). Gender has no impact on the structural and functional dimensions of social support in the life of the post retired aging respondents. Both the male and female aging respondents report similar size of social network (number of people) and the level of satisfaction derived from them (Table 17).
The correlation analysis which was performed to explore relationship between positive subjective experiences and social support provide valuable insights in understanding the direction and strength of dimensions under consideration. It was observed that from the total sample of 139 aging respondents, all the four dimensions of positive subjective experiences (happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope) were significantly and positively related to each other (Table 21). However, pathway sub-scale of hope was the only dimension which was found unrelated to optimism and the two dimensions of social support (structural and functional) for the total sample.

The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with the structural and functional dimensions of social support (Table 22) for the total sample of aging respondents (Figure 13). Also, the structural and functional social support of the aging respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

Results of the pre-retired, retired and post retired group provide greater insights into the relationship between positive subjective experiences and social support. Surprisingly, optimism has been found unrelated with hope and the two sub-scales of hope (i.e., agency and pathway) in the three groups: pre-retired, retired and post retired (Tables 23, 25 and 27) respectively. In addition, only a moderate association between optimism and hope has been found in aging male respondents (Table 29). In a paper titled, “Distinguishing hope and optimism: Two sides of a coin, or two separate coins?”, Bryant and Cvengros (2004) stated that although the concepts of hope and optimism are correlated, they are still distinct theoretical constructs.
The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with only the functional dimension of social support (Table 24) for the pre-retired aging respondents (Figure 14). Also, the structural and functional social support of the pre-retired aging respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

![Figure 14: Correlations between Positive Subjective Experiences and Social Support (Structural: SSQN and Functional SSQS) of the pre-retired aging respondents (N=55)](image)

N.S – Not Significant
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with structural and functional dimension of social support (Table 26) for the retired aging respondents (Figure 15). Also, the structural and functional social support of the retired aging respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

![Figure 15: Correlations between Positive Subjective Experiences and Social Support (Structural: SSQN and Functional SSQS) of the retired aging respondents (N=40)](image)
The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with only the structural dimension of social support (Table 28) for the post-retired aging respondents (Figure 16). However, the structural and functional social support of the post-retired aging respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

\[ \text{Positive Subjective Experiences} \]

\[ \text{Structural Social Support (SSQN)} \]

\[ \text{Functional Social Support (SSQS)} \]

N.S – Not Significant
**  Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*  Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 16: Correlations between Positive Subjective Experiences and Social Support (Structural: SSQN and Functional SSQS) of the post-retired aging respondents (N=44)

Moreover, the relationship between optimism and social support has been found either moderate or insignificant across the three working groups (Table 23, 25 and 27). Even though the two dimensions of social support (structural: SSQN and functional: SSQS) are significantly related to each other in the three working groups, discrepancies in the dimensions of positive subjective experiences (happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope) have been observed. Structural social support (number of persons) has been found to possess very less or no relationship with happiness, hope and the sub-scales of hope (i.e. agency and pathway) in all three working groups (Table 23, 25 and 27). Besides, the structural dimension (SSQN) of social support has been found unrelated to optimism in both the pre-retired and post-retired group (Table 23 and 27) and moderately related in case of the retired group (Table 25).

The functional dimension of social support (level of satisfaction) has been found to be unrelated to happiness, hope and sub-scales of hope in the pre-retired (Table 23) group of aging respondents. Amusingly, social support (structural and functional) has
been observed to have no relationship with the dimensions of positive subjective experiences of the post retired aging respondents (Table 27). Only life satisfaction and agency have been found related with structural and functional social support, respectively. This study shows that as people retire and progress into the post retirement phase of their lives, the experience of positive emotional states including happiness, optimism and hope is unrelated to the size of their social network or to the level of satisfaction derived from them. The oldest old respondents were observed to be free from the restrictions of depending on others in order to maintain a positive stand on life. However, compared to the functional dimensions of social support, the structural dimension was found to bear some relationship with the combined positive subjective experiences (Table 28).

It is of crucial significance to understand gender differences in the overall relationship between positive subjective experiences and social support. Even though the four dimensions of positive subjective experiences of post retired group has been seen to possess no significant relationship with social support (structural and functional), critical gender differences exists inside the apparent layer of correlations. The structural social support (number of persons) was significantly related to all four dimensions of positive subjective experiences for all the male aging respondents (Table 29) whereas the functional social support (level of satisfaction) was significantly related to all four dimensions of positive subjective experiences in the case of all the female aging respondents (Table 31). Thus arises the need and importance of diverse forms of social support for the male and female aging respondents.

The findings from the present study also indicate differences in the relationship between positive subjective experiences and social support for the male and female aging respondents. The four dimensions of positive subjective experiences correlate significantly with each other in case of male aging respondents (Table 29). However, no significant relationship between optimism and hope exists for the aging female respondents when compared to their male equivalents (Table 31). Moreover, the pathway sub-scale of hope was found to be unrelated with happiness, life satisfaction and optimism in case of aging females across the working groups (Table 31).
The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with the structural and functional social support (Table 30) for the aging male respondents (Figure 17). Also, the structural and functional social support of the aging male respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

** Figure 17: Correlations between Positive Subjective Experiences and Social Support (Structural: SSQN and Functional SSQS) of the aging male respondents (N=75)**

The positive subjective experiences were positively and significantly related with the structural and functional social support (Table 32) for the aging female respondents (Figure 18). Also, the structural and functional social support of the aging female respondents were positively and significantly related to each other.

** Figure 18: Correlations between Positive Subjective Experiences and Social Support (Structural: SSQN and Functional SSQS) of the aging female respondents (N=64)**
A simple linear regression of social support on the positive subjective experiences provides valuable insights into the lives of the aging respondents. Overall, the functional (level of satisfaction) social support explains 2.7% more variance in positive subjective experiences than the structural dimension (Table 33 and 34) as shown in Figure 19.

The variance in the positive subjective experiences of the pre-retired group was explained more by the functional support (level of satisfaction) than the structural (number of persons) in the social network (Table 35 and 36) as shown in Figure 20.
Consequently, the variance in the positive subjective experiences of the retired group was explained more by the functional support (level of satisfaction) than the structural (number of persons) in the social network (Table 37 and 38) as shown in Figure 21.

![Figure 21: Variance in Positive Subjective Experiences as explained by the Structural and Functional Social Support of the Retired aging respondents (N=40)](image)

However, notable difference exists in the degree of variance in positive subjective experiences explained by the functional (level of satisfaction) social support of pre-retired and retired groups (Table 36 and 38). As high as 28.7% variance in positive subjective experiences of the retired group has been explained by the functional support (Table 38) compared to 10.4% variance in positive subjective experiences of the pre-retired group as explained by the functional support (Table 36). It indicates that 18.3% more variance in positive subjective experiences of retired group has been explained by the functional support than the percentage of variance explained by the same variable in the pre-retired group (Table 36 and 38). These findings are a testimony of the importance of level of satisfaction for those who freshly retire from service. It is pertinent to point out that Blace (2012) found that functional ability, participation in physical activities and participation in activities with formal support networks explain 23.7% variance in life satisfaction.

The only reverse trend has been observed in case of post retired aging respondents, for whom the functional dimension explains 1.3% less variance than the structural dimension of social support (Table 39 and 40). Similar pattern has been revealed in
Table 16. The one way analysis of variance between the three groups of pre-retired, retired and post retired on the dimensions of social support indicate that the mean value on the structural social support is the highest and in case of functional social support it is the lowest for the post retired group (Table 16), even though the F value was insignificant. The happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and hope of the oldest old is better explained and predicted more by the number of persons in their social network and less by the level of satisfaction derived from them as shown in Figure 22.

![Figure 22: Variance in Positive Subjective Experiences as explained by the Structural and Functional Social Support of the Post Retired aging respondents (N=44)](image)

A further exploration of this trend on the basis of gender provides more meaningful insights. The retired males have a higher mean score on the functional social support compared to the retired females (Table 19). It suggests that even though the need for functional social support in maintaining a high level of positive subjective experiences is most prominent in case of the retired group (Table 38), the retired males still have a higher level of satisfaction from their social network when compared to the retired females (Table 19).

On the whole, notable diversions in the percentage of variance in, positive subjective experiences as explained by the two dimensions of social support, have been reported in case of male and female aging respondents as shown in Figure 23 and 24.
In the sample of aging male respondents, positive subjective experiences were more explained and predicted by the structural social support (Table 41) whereas in the sample of aging female respondents, positive subjective experiences were more explained and predicted by the functional social support (Table 44). It is indicated that
as men age, they require wider and more diverse social network whereas as women age, they need more satisfaction from social support.

Sociograms are the graphic representation depicting structural dimension of social support including number of persons available for support, size of the social network and frequency of dependence for support along with the demographic characteristics of the respondent. Important findings have been mentioned for the pre-retired (N=55), retired (N=40) and post retired (N=44) male and female aging respondents based on the observations from their sociograms.

For the pre-retired class aging male and female aging respondents, spouse and children dominate the social network system. They are followed (in decreasing order of importance assigned to) by friends and colleagues. However, pre-retired female aging respondents rated divinity and devotion to God as an alternative to the human social support network, much more frequently than pre-retired class aging males. Irrespective of gender, pre-retired class aging persons depend on their family (spouse, children, siblings and relatives) and on some occasions, friends. There is less time for leisure activities such as travel, listening to music, writing or reading. In addition, respondents did not indicate dependence on any spiritual or meditative activities to feel better in times of distress to feel relaxed (Appendix M).

In case of the retired aging males, mostly in the age group of 60-65 years and recently retired from service, social support is derived largely from spouse (Appendix N). Majority of the aging males report a high level of satisfaction from their spouse and consider them valuable. Chen and Short (2008) in their study on oldest old Chinese elderly found that living alone has detrimental effects on subjective wellbeing whereas living with spouse has positive impact. Under different situations, the retired males seek support from spouse and prefer to depend on them over others. In 6 out of 20 cases, the male respondents have indicated support from “nobody” and 2 out of 20 male respondents expressed dependence on themselves and nobody else. This is an interesting finding since “self reliance” and the dependence on “self” was repeatedly expressed more by the aging post retired males (66 years and above). This suggests personal liberation from the conventional social support network. Siblings (especially
same sex, i.e. brothers of the aging retired males) were also perceived as support. Friendships and relationship with colleagues are also a support system for the retired aging males but interestingly less diverse when compared to the post retired aging males. Children are also perceived as important sources of support, consolation in times of distress and joy. However when asked, “who accepts you totally including both your best and worst points?” the support from spouse was acknowledged immensely. This can also be attributed to the ‘empty nest syndrome’, the aging parents are likely to experience in the later years of life. Many respondents in the study were aging couples or singles living alone and far from their children. The study reveals that spouse support is irreplaceable from the support that even comes from own children.

The aging retired females (60 to 65 years) show varied nature of social support compared to their aging retired male counterparts (Appendix N). In addition to support from spouse, which continues to remain dominant, ‘divinity’, ‘religious practices’ and ‘experience of God’, were observed as some forms of social support. Children are also perceived as essential social support in case of both the retired aging males and females. Nevertheless, unlike retired aging males, the retired aging females consider siblings as social support, irrespective of gender. Sisters play a vital role in their lives as much of their anxieties (stronger identification) and sense of loss is shared with them whereas brothers are perceived as source of emotional strength. It reflects that even though the primary family for a woman post marriage comprises spouse and children, the maintenance of healthy relationship with their siblings is an equally potent source of positivity in later life. Most of the elderly respondents (males and females) remain hesitant in depending on their son-in-law whereas a daughter-in-law, due to proximity in social interactions, is considered more dependable when help is required. Marriage of a daughter is a sacred ceremony and it is preferred by most retired persons to seek each other’s or family relatives assistance in times of need rather than approaching their son-in-law. In rare cases where parents of the elderly are alive, they continue to inspire their children and provide unconditional love and acceptance.

In the lives of post retired aging males and females there is great importance of spouse support. However, noteworthy changes were observed in their sociograms
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(Appendix O). Out of the 25 post retired males, 5 mentioned that they depend on “themselves” under different situations when support is required. 2 respondents expressed that they depend on “nobody” when help is asked for and reported very low level of satisfaction from others. Furthermore, for the aforesaid cases, the number of persons was less in other areas of support too. Those who were depended on “self” had better level of satisfaction (functional social support) and more number of persons in their social network (structural social support) compared to those who replied “nobody”. In case of post retired men, in spite of the dominance of spouse support, a sudden trend of same sex companionship and friendships have emerged in very late years of life. In sociograms where social support is less, the dependence on friends is also low. The more satisfied persons are those who seem to enjoy friendships. Leisure activities such as watching television, reading and traveling were found very less prevalent while greater interest has been shown in making friends and spending time with them. Solitary activities such as personal writing and reading were observed less from the sociograms of the post retired elderly males. Also, the importance of having supportive neighbors increase as the post retired males try to diversify and extend their social network and interactions. This finding is consistent with findings of Chadha et al (1990) who found that neighbors were a tremendous source of support. In another study conducted on older adults Shaw (2005) found that older adults have more frequent contact with neighbors and hence anticipate support from them and further suggested that neighbors as a source of support should be enhanced to promote successful aging. It has been suggested that retirement may facilitate greater social connectedness (Cornwell et al, 2008). In the present study it was seen that post retired males also look forward to their teachers and aspire to live a life on the principles guided by them.

The post retired elderly females show dissimilar nature of social support network compared to post retired elderly males (Appendix O). Elderly women outlive their male counterparts and live as widows, mostly with children, relatives or alone. Out of 19 post retired elderly females, 3 were living completely alone and all by themselves as widows of their deceased husband. An individual analysis of their sociograms reveals greater dependence on children, aging siblings and reliance on family
relatives. One sociogram of an 80 year old female widow living alone reported extremely low social support and few number of persons. Her sociograms can be compared to that of another elderly widow aged 82 years but living with family and who has a high level of satisfaction (functional social support) and more number of persons (structural social support) in social network. Hence the importance of living arrangement is critical determinant of social support and wellbeing for aged women. Proximity and availability of persons are natural predictors of social support. Besides, social support is more conventional for them and friendships are less prominent when compared to post retired males. A study of their sociograms denote their inclination towards God’s help as substitute for social support over friends. Hardly any of the post retired females indicate dependence on friends or on “themselves”. Social support for them is tied to family members, siblings and relatives. 6 out of 19 post retired females designate grand children as very important in their lives and seek their help. It is relevant to point out that Chyi and Mao (2011) also indicated that elderly who live with their grandchildren express high self rated happiness. In contrast, the sociograms of post retired males indicate that none of the respondents mentioned grandchildren in the persons they seek support. Alternatively, the post retired females show significantly less dependence on neighbors compared to post retired males who frequently depend on their neighbors.