Chapter 6

CASE STUDIES AND THEIR ANALYSIS

Research on the ageing is an area where one technique of data collection is not sufficient. Therefore, in addition to quantitative data present study focused on qualitative research methods also. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the failures, pain, despair and hope in the lives of single elderly qualitative method was used. In order to highlight the whole life experiences of the elderly case study method used. The present chapter focused on the case studies of single elderly i.e. widowed, never married and divorced. Through case studies viewpoint of the elderly captured their subjective experiences of life. The use of in-depth data collection methods in this study yielded not only facts about the challenges and losses but also elicited their reactions and adaptations to adversity in managing their daily lives independently. This added depth and breadth to the present study.

It was believed that case studies would help to examine hidden aspect in the lives of the single elderly. Explanation during in-depth interviews provided data that was not captured through quantitative study. Since these elderly were living alone and spending last years of their lives in isolation they were willing to interact with the researcher and share their stories at length. Through interaction with single elderly the researcher was able to gather information about their social relationships, loneliness and social isolation.

In all 10 case studies of both male and female single elderly residing in Chandigarh were taken. Although there are commonalities in life experiences of elderly but the aging experience is quite different for women and men especially with regard to marital status and class background. Keeping in mind these variations case from different class back ground and marital status were included. To maintain the secrecy and confidentiality of the cases the respondents were described with fictitious names. After the detailed description of the cases an attempt was made to highlight certain commonalities and variations in the circumstances of these cases in the analysis.

Case A

‘Case A’ is 83 years old widower. He belongs to unreserved Hindu family with urban background. He has been living in Chandigarh for more than 40 years. He is staying alone in his home with a servant, for last two years. His wife died due to heart disease. His wife was matriculate and was a house maker. He is a commerce graduate and a retired pensioner. He worked in a Nationalized Bank. He is getting Rs. 50,000 as pension and also having a fixed term deposits. He owns one kanal house in a posh area at Chandigarh. He has two sons; his elder son is an engineer by profession. His second son is a graduate who went to abroad after his graduation and has settled with his family in Canada. The old man had three siblings; he had two brothers and one sister. Both of his brothers died about 70-80 years of age. His sister is alive and living outside the city with her family. After his retirement, he was staying with his wife, son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren.
Earlier he was staying with his elder son and his family; but afterwards he is living alone in a one kanal house with a servant. For the last 12 years his elder son is residing in a separate house along with his family.

The old man stated that:

“Earlier we were staying together in one home, my grandchildren born here. But later, my son and daughter-in-law decided to move to a separate household. I was happy with my wife. I had a better and comfortable life in her company. My daughter-in-law had her own mindset who wanted to live independently. She felt uncomfortable to reside with us and my son spoke her language. They left us. I don’t want to blame anybody. I miss my wife too much. My son is very obedient; however he could not oppose his wife’s decisions. My grandchildren are very fond of me”.

Old man has cordial relations with his sons even though they are not staying with him. He occasionally talks to his son who has settled abroad. His grandchildren are very close to him. They often visit his house. He enjoys their company very much.

The elderly man always misses his wife because he was very much attached to her. He mentioned while interviewing that he had a close bond with his wife and they used to share emotions and feeling with each other. According to him, the life partner is the only one who can understand emotions and feeling of each other. He further mentioned about his wife that she was a nice lady. His eyes became wet while saying:

“woh mujhe kabhi koi kaam nahi karne deti thi, hamesha mera sara kaam karti thi jo ki mai ab bohut miss karta hu (She never allowed me to do any household chore. She always did my all household works. These all small things I miss a lot)”. 

He found himself very lonely because he always feels her absence. He showed the pictures of his wife too. He does his household chores like washing clothes, maintaining house, shopping and buying medicines for himself etc. He visits to the market to buy daily grocery items and vegetables. Rest of the household chores is done by his servant. He never ask for any assistance from his children, whom he had given the best education possible, within his means but now he is living alone without any support from his sons.

He also mentioned:

“My daughter-in-law sometimes makes food for me and sends to my house. Otherwise, my servant makes food for me. But in the morning I make my own breakfast and tea”.

‘Case A’ did not blame his sons for leaving him to his fate. He has learnt to cope with loneliness. He spends time with his friends. He is a regular visitor to Rose Garden where he spends 2 -3 hours daily in the company of other elderly persons. He has a good social network system as he mentioned that he is also connected with
religious organization. His physical health is deteriorated due to aging which also has affected his daily activities. Otherwise he didn’t have any physical ailment.

The researcher noticed that his life outside home is pretty good but inside home it is not so because of loneliness which affect his mental health. He is lonelier than socially isolated.

To combat loneliness the elderly man has evolved different ways to keep himself busy. Either he is involved in the household activities or in religious activities. He has diverted himself towards religious activities. He believes in Sai Baba and also attends various religious congregations to keep himself busy. Along with his servant he managed the maintenance of his house. If he has to go outside the city his servant used to drive the car. He said, “Religion plays a great role in the life of a human being”. Further, he reported that prayer gave him inner peace. He was socially very active person. He always feels concerned about his neighborhood and his neighborhood support him in the time of need. Most of the maintenance works of his area are done by him. His elder son supports him emotionally. ‘Case A’ suggested that court cases of single elderly persons should be solved as soon as possible.

It was found that ‘Case A’ was living in an environment where he was surrounded by people in his journey of life. But later, his wife and he were left behind by his sons. He had emotional bond with his wife and they were dependent on each other. But when his wife died he has been left all alone. He lost his emotional bond and a partner on whom he was dependent to spend his old age. Due to the loss of his wife, he feels loneliness.

Case B

‘Case B’ is an eighty six year-old widow who is belonging to a non-reserved Hindu family and came to Chandigarh after few years of her marriage. She is belonging to a rural and middle socio economic background of Haryana and she has studied up to 4th class. She had to leave the school because her family did not allow her to continue her education. After leaving school she did household work at her parental house. She got married when she was 17 years old. She didn’t do any work except household work. Now, she is getting rental income from the first floor of the house. ‘Case B’ gets Rs. 8,000 monthly as rental income and has no other source of income. ‘Case B’ was a house wife who was earlier living with her husband and mother-in-law. Her husband studied up to 10th class and was working as a clerk on contractual basis in Panjab University. Her husband had cancer and he died at the age of 62 years when she was 54 years old. After 6 years of her husband’s death, her mother-in-law also died. She is living alone for last 26 years in a 10 marla house. She is living in the same house for over 50 years. Her house is not in good condition.

She stated that she is facing widowhood for over 32 years. She has no child because her health didn’t allow her to bear children. They didn’t adopt any child and it was their personal choice. ‘Case B’ has a brother who lives in Chandigarh with his own family. She has good relations with her brother and children of her brother who often visit her house.
She reported herself quite social with her neighbors and has a few friends. But she avoids meeting them after as she didn’t have enough money to entertain them. She stated that:

“Agar apko samaaj se mil ke raha hai toh apke paas kharchne ke liye paise hona bahut jaruri hai (If you want to get socially connected then you should have enough money to spend”).

‘Case B’ has a very bad physical health. She reported a cardiac problem. She had a bypass surgery 4 years ago with the financial help of her brother. She also told that due to her adversing age her physical strength is also reducing. She spoke repeatedly about being self-reliant, but at the same time she very much enjoyed the social ties she had built in her life when her husband was alive. She seemed to have an excellent balance of loneliness and sociability. She feels loneliness because she didn’t have enough money to spend on her daily expenses. She avoids going outside the house because she did not have proper clothes to wear, not even have a pair of slippers. She feels comfortable in her neighborhood because her husband was a very kind and humble person. But after the death of her husband she was left alone in the house. Her husband was a likeable man who was respected well in the neighborhood. So her neighborhood shows sympathy to her situation. ‘Case B’ said that there are many people who wish to talk to her but she has made herself isolated due to bad financial condition. She said that she cannot afford social ties. She has a poor social networking and the reason for her poor social networking is her status of widow and her poor financial condition. She stated with a humble voice:

“Market me bhi bahut logh jaan pehchan wale hain, isiliye mai market bhi nahi jati kyunki agar kisi ne kuchh kharidne ke liye bola, toh jabmere paas paisa hi nahi hain toh kaise kuchh kharid loon (there are many people in the market who know me so I avoid going to market too because if someone ask me to buy something but how can I do it when I don’t have money).

During good times her husband made a house which is now the only source of income for her. However, the condition of the house has become very bad which needed maintenance but due to her adversing age and poor financial condition she is not able to maintain the house. She cannot raise adequate amount of rent as her house is not properly maintained and is in shambles. However she has given the house on rent to a family producing some income to her. But the rent they give is not sufficient for her. She further mentioned:

“Jab ye log rent pe rahne aaye toh inka beta 2 mahino ka tha par ab woh 9 saal ka ho gya hai lekin rent utna hi dete hain aur na kiraya barhtey hain aur na hi ghar khali karte hai (when they came to live on rent their son was 2 months old and now he is 9 years old but they give rent as they were giving 9 years ago).”

Further ‘Case B’ told that rent being the only source of her income, it is difficult for her to make both ends meet. She gets rent irregularly. She also filed a
police complaint for getting irregular rent or the low rent but didn’t get help because her tenants showed to the police that they were paying the rent regularly to her. She stated that she didn’t inform her brother about it because she is afraid that her brother would force her to sell the house and to shift to his house which she never wants. So she had no other option than to live in penury pitiable condition. She is living alone and isolated but active at home. She stated:

“\text{I am staying alone after the death of my husband. It was a great loss of me. I have very good memories of him. We were very happy with each other. But his death ruined everything. I become lonely and have no one to take care of me. I have a big house but I can’t maintain the house alone. Even my tenants are not sympathetic towards me. They are looting me. I have to make both ends meet income my tenants give me as rent. What can I tell you about my life? I have nothing to live and die.}”

‘Case B’ feels very lonely and sad without her husband. She was very attached to him and still mourned her loss. She misses him every day and would not erase his memory form her mind. Nevertheless, she is very thankful to him that he left a home for her to live in and which is also a source of income to meet the expenditure. She keeps herself busy in the household chores and in tending the plants grown in the backyard of the house. It is her most favorite pastime which gives her some succor. She has some physical ailments, too for which she has to buy costly medicines. She feels insecure too as there is no one to look after her.

She said:

“I don’t have any problem in staying alone but my husband didn’t think about our old age. I am living hand to mouth. I miss him too much. I can’t go alone outside because I always feel his absence. I avoid going on a walk because if I go outside for walk I miss him too much. It remained me of the times we used to walk together. At one point, she told that she avoided certain places. She became quieter and stated that she didn’t go there anymore because – “it’s different, you know, once you’ve been happy in a certain place and your situation change to worse…”

She referred to a time in the past when she and her husband had frequently visited some places. She seemed not to have forgotten feelings of closeness and togetherness with her husband. She feels alone after her husband’s death and could not come to terms with the circumstances even after 32 years of her widowhood. She didn’t even have a support system except her brother. She does her household and other work by her own. She has nothing much to cope up with her loneliness except spending time on her hobbies like gardening inside the house only. ‘Case B’ was found completely lonely as well as isolated. She suggested that Government must look on the financial and security matters of single elderly persons living alone.
It was found that living alone in old age in the absence of the spouse is difficult. The present case is the perfect example for this. It was found that due to the death of her husband and the poor financial condition made her lonely and socially isolated. These circumstances made her to limit her social life and forced to live in isolation.

**Case C**

‘Case C’ is 82 year-old unmarried woman belonging unreserved caste of Hindu family with urban background living in Chandigarh. She belongs to the upper class and was the only child of her parents. She has a good educational background. She completed Masters Degree in Philosophy from abroad in 1955. She got opportunity to get best education because she belongs to a well educated family and has a good socio-economic background. She also revealed that her family supported her for higher education. She stated that her father was the first ICS officer from Haryana. She groomed herself as an independent and career oriented woman. She served as a lecturer in a Government school of Chandigarh and also worked as Principal of the school. She was posted as a Deputy Director in the Education Department of Chandigarh. She was getting a handsome salary when she was working and after retirement is getting good pension. She stated:

“I am getting a very good pension from the Government which is enough for my basic necessities and for healthy living. It became possible as I served the education department of the Government for a very long period of 31 years”.

According to ‘Case C’ as she was career oriented, she paid more attention to advance in her career than other aspects of her life. She was career driven and maintained to reach its heights soon. She ignored all other dimension of her life. As she was very happy living with her parents and was very satisfied with her job, she didn’t think of getting married early. As the time raced along with her career she didn’t find any suitable match. She had a limited choice as her age advanced. The time fleetted fast and she was left unmarried. She is living alone in one kanal house for more than 40 years. Her both the parents have died. After the death of her parents, loneliness dawned on her. Her mother died 20 years ago. Still she misses her parents and feels helpless in their absence. She stated as follows:

“I never felt loneliness when my parents were alive. They always gave me a good company. But now, I am living alone. Who is willing to live alone but there is no other option left for me”.

She is living in a very big and once a very beautiful house which is now in a very bad condition because being an old and single woman it is difficult for her to maintain the house. She has confined herself to a single room despite having a big house, which is also in very bad condition. That single room serves as a drawing room, a living room and a bed room for her. It is adjoining to the kitchen and washroom. The researcher found her a religious person as half of her room was filled
of religious items (painting of idols, holy water, religious texts etc.). The environment around her house is very good as she is living in a posh sector of Chandigarh. But she feels lonely at her home which is also affecting her mental health. She is a victim of anxiety and forgetfulness. Her physical health seems well as she didn’t mention any physical ailment. But it is apparent due to her advanced age; she has become less active and incapable of doing many things. She feels that her life is empty as no one is there in her life to share her emotions and feelings. ‘Case C’ has a very big garden in her house where she keeps busy herself in gardening, growing fruits and vegetables. She eats simple vegetarian food. She cooks food for herself twice a day. She worships everyday which gives her peace of mind and keeps her away from the negative and idle thoughts. She stated:

“I do my work of my own because nobody comes to my house for work. I feel helpless many times as I do not have any servant. I don’t trust anybody. Even I don’t allow any stranger to enter in my house because I am a single woman and I feel insecure. I spent most of the time in gardening and worshipping”.

She is well contacted with an NGO called Help Age India (Delhi) and donates money from time to time to this organization. But she never visited this NGO because she doesn’t want to go out. She doesn’t have any mobile phone but she has kept a land line phone. Financially ‘Case C’ is strong. She has no dearth of materialistic things. In spite of all the comforts she feels lonely as she is not in contact with any of her relatives. She has limited friends who visit her seldom. But this cannot overcome her loneliness. At that time of need she calls her friends to help her. ‘Case C’ is always an independent and confident woman. She stated:

“My life was very smooth and busy when I was working but there is a sudden change in my life after retirement. I have nothing to expect talking to the four walls of my house. There is no one at home, with whom I can talk. Even my social circle ended with the end of Job. I feel irritated sometimes and become aggressive too. But all these things are not in my control”.

She feels loneliness and isolation within the house and blamed her age for it. Her social networking system has been reduced due to her age. Without any company she feels insecure in her house. She mentioned that it is not safe for a single woman to stay alone. The crime against senior citizen living alone has also worried her. All these aggravated her anxiety and loneliness. ‘Case C’ suggested that there should be security measures for single elderly especially for single women living alone.

The researcher found that ‘Case C’ was an independent woman, who was earlier living with her parents. She never missed anything while living with her parents as she was always pampered by her parents. She enjoyed their company. But after the death of her parents, she started missing people around her. She also realized the importance of family. Being single and independent woman she became arrogant
and stopped talking to her relatives. Now, in the absence of her parents, she has been left all alone which emerged the main reason for her loneliness. She kept herself isolated because she feels insecure.

Case D

‘Case D’ is a 62 year old widow who belongs to a reserved caste Hindu family. She came to Chandigarh after her marriage and was living in Chandigarh for the last 40 years. She is illiterate and belongs to a rural background of Utter Pradesh. Her husband had education upto primary and worked as a labourer. ‘Case D’ belonged to a poor family. She was 16 years old when she got married. ‘Case D’ and her husband lived hand to mouth but were still happy because they lived together. Then her husband died due to kidney failure. ‘Case D’ told that her husband was taking treatment in PGI for kidney ailment but could not survive because both of his kidneys stopped working. She became widow 9 years ago. After her husband’s death the whole burden of the family fell on her shoulders. Her life was full of struggles.

She has a son who is married and also living in the same house. The house has two stories- the ground floor and the first floor. There is one room on each floor. On the ground floor her son is staying with his wife and two children. She is given a very small room on the first floor in which there is only space for a folding bed and some other necessary things. She has set up kitchen within her room as there is no separate kitchen. The room is very congested. She works as a house maid and earned Rs. 2000 Rs. per month. She is also a registered pensioner in the social welfare of Chandigarh administration from where she also getting widow pension. Her son and daughter-in-law feel her as a burden on them. Her son separated himself and let her live on the first floor. They are not in talking terms with her. Her daughter-in-law fights with her. She stated:

“Meri bahu chahti hai ki main ghar se chali jaoon taki woh ye room bhi rent pe laga de aur paise bananay ke liye. Mera beta ek dihari ka mazdoor ka kaam karta hai. Bahut baar ye mujhse badtami zi se baat karte hain aur mujhe marte bhi hain. Mera paota mere bahut karib hai par jab woh mujhse baat karta hai toh usko bhi daant dete hai (My daughter-in-law wants me to leave the house so that they can rent it on to generate income. My son is a labourer and works on daily wages. Many times they misbehave with me and beat me. My grandson is very attached with me but they threaten him also if he talks to me)”.

‘Case D’ is living a very depressed and fearful life. She lives in a place where there is no privacy and no place to rest. She is facing health problems which are apparently related with the aging process like loss of hearing, weak eye sight, dental ailment and arthritis. She also complained of forgetfulness which could be related to the old age. She described her health as poor. She feels depressed due to the bad
behavior of her son and daughter-in-law. She loves her grandchildren but they are not allowed to talk to her. Her financial condition is very poor and at this age she is working for her livelihood. She said with a heavy voice:

“Jab mujhe paise milte hain mera beta aur bahu bade achahe se baat karte hain aur jabdasti mere se paise le lete hain. Mait apne sare kharche khud hi karte hoon. Mere pass kabhi kabhi sabzi kharidne ke paise bhi nahin hote. Mujhe toh pata nahin kiske liye jee rahyu main. meri zindgi toh khali padi hai. (Whenever I have money, they always treat me nicely and take money from me forcibly. I manage all my expenses myself. Sometimes I don’t have money to buy fruits or vegetables. I don’t know for whom I am living … my life is empty)”.

Her mental health is not good because she feels very depressed and lonely all the time. She spends most of her time working house to house and rest of the time she worships for her son because she still has good feeling for her son. She is not connected with any organization or association because she is not educated and didn’t even have money and time for all these. She said:

“Main bahut gareeb hoon!! Aur hum gareebon ke liye ye sab nahi bane hai” (I am very poor and all these associations and organizations are not made for us).

She has some relatives with whom she is contacted and talks very rarely on phone, only. But she lacks the support of her family as during difficult times also. She doesn’t have any social networking system because of misbehavior of her daughter-in-law. Her family doesn’t listen to her. Even if other relatives came for her help, her daughter-in-law fights with them too. She feels socially isolated too because she doesn’t have any friend with whom she could talk and share her pain. She is stigmatized as a widow by other people and finds herself neglected by the people. She further added that she is not afraid of her safety because she had nothing could be stolen or taken away from her. She suggested that financial help to be provided to single elderly persons as they are not able to work anymore.

The researcher found that widowhood and old age were the main reasons for her problems. When ‘Case D’ was living with her husband, she was happy. But after the death of her husband, she became lonely and isolated.

Case E

‘Case E’ is a 63 year-old male divorcee who belongs to Hindu Reserved caste background and is living in Chandigarh for about 40 years. He belongs to rural background (Uttar Pradesh) and studied up to primary education from a rural area of Uttar Pradesh. He got married at the age of 17 years in the village. His wife was illiterate and was a home maker. ‘Case E’ has two sisters who were married in the vicinity of their parental village. He belongs to a poor family. He came to Chandigarh alone for earning. After six years, he brought his wife and two children (son and a
daughter) with him and settled down in Chandigarh. He started living in a rented house with his family. He was a worker in a carpenter’s shop and used to get wages on daily basis.

‘Case E’ told that his wife had an extra marital affair. They started fighting everyday and could not handle the relationship and got divorced. She took both the children with her. After 2 years of separation, when she could not take care of the children and was not able to spend money to educate them she left both the children with me and she moved to Delhi. He got divorced from his wife 37 years ago. Now both of his children are married. ‘Case E’ stated that his daughter is married in Sonipat (Haryana) and his son is living in Chandigarh. He has cordial relations with his children. He stated:

“I am happy for my children that they are settled in their life. But I feel very lonely and unhappy in my life because all these things happened to me. Now my life has become pointless. Because I am getting old and no one to take care of me, I feel lonely. I don’t have companion to share and my emotions”.

Now he is getting aged day by day and not able to work as he used to work earlier. He is still living in the one room rented accommodation and managed all the things himself. His financial status is very poor. He told that it is difficult for him to work but for his livelihood he has to work. He feels loneliness at his home since he is living alone for the last 9 years and he told that his home is very small and at a congested place. He is also having a respiratory problem and taking treatment from PGI sector 12, Chandigarh. He visits the hospital alone and buys his medicines for himself. His mental health is also poor as he is facing difficulty in sleeping.

‘Case E’ cooks food for himself twice a day. He buys vegetables and fruits whenever he needs. He does all household chores himself. He works the whole day and come home late because he doesn’t want to live alone in the house. He frequently visits his friend’s house to cope up with his loneliness. He has started drinking Alcohol with his friends which made his condition worse. He is not connected to any association or organization to make use of his time because he neither has money nor he wants to join them. He stated that he is somewhat socially connected. He has some good friends with whom he can share his loneliness. His financial condition is not good, because he is not able to manage his expenses within his budget. He earns Rs. 6,000 per month. Sometimes he borrows money from his friends. He sometimes gets social support from his friends. He stated:

“There is no one for me and no one to understand my emotions. I feel myself alone old age man without a family. I have no one to care and love. But there are some people on whom I can trust completely and they are there for me in the time of need”.

196
His son comes to visit him frequently but cannot help financially; because his son’s financial condition is also not good. ‘Case E’ tries to socially isolate himself because he feels stigmatized as a divorced person. He told that he is not afraid of his security as he is a divorced male and has nothing more to lose. ‘Case E’ feels lonelier than isolated. He suggested that Government should provide support system to single elderly persons living alone.

The researcher found that the life of ‘Case E’ was full of up and downs. He got divorced and the burden of his children was on him. He kept busy himself to provide basic facilities to his children. But when his children got married, he started feeling lonely because he spent his life in the company of his children. But in old age when he is dependent, there is no one to take care of him. This made him to feel loneliness.

Case F

‘Case F’ is a 61 year-old divorced man who belongs to a non-reserved Sikh family and is living in Chandigarh for more than 40 years. He is born and brought up in Chandigarh. He is a Bachelor of Engineering (B.E.). At the age of 21 years he got married to a very beautiful 17 years old girl who belongs to a rural background of Punjab and got education up to matriculation. ‘Case F’ has a sister who is married and living with her family in Canada. ‘Case F’ belongs to an upper class family and living alone with his 2 servants in a house built in 1 Kanal area. He worked as an Engineer in government sector in Chandigarh. His life was very good in the initial years of his marriage. He mentioned that he had everything at that time - family, money, house and a good job. But after 7 years of his marriage, when his daughter was 6 years old and son was 2 years old, he got divorced. He blamed his wife for their divorce. ‘Case F’ found his wife’s misdemeanor when he saw her flirting with other men. He was suspicious of her character. He narrated the story of his life as follows:

“I was going through a very depressed life and because of this I took voluntary retirement from the job. After quitting the job my wife got more aggressive and filed appeal for divorce. I was depressed and the circumstances were so bad that I was thinking to commit suicide even but it was not that easy. Faces of my innocent children were flashing in my mind. So I thought to deal with the situation. And after 10 years of my married life I got divorced. She ruined everything that I had”.

‘Case F’ mentioned that after divorce she took his children along with her. He gave everything to his wife whatever he had except the house in which presently living. His house is very big and in the posh location of Chandigarh. His divorced wife also wanted that house because the value of the house is in crores. He stated:

“She has threatened me to take my life if I don’t give power of attorney of the house to her”. This is my father’s house and my emotions are attached with the house. So I cannot give this house to a wrong person”.

197
His children are grown up but due to his sour relations with his divorced wife they refused to talk to him. His daughter is married in Delhi. He loves his children very much. He further told:

“I have asked my children to live with me but they always refuse to come to me. They are misguided by my divorced wife. They hate me for no reason. They talk to me only when they need money. My children also ask me to give power of attorney to their mother. They have put this precondition for talking to me.

‘Case F’ is living a fearful life because his ex-wife abuses him and threatens him with his life. Whenever his children visit his house they behave very rudely because his ex-wife has misguided both of them.

‘Case F’ is suffering from depression, anxiety and hypertension. For these, mental ailments he is taking medicines prescribed by a private doctor located near his house. He told that he is otherwise enjoying a good health. His financial condition is good. He is having pension from the Government department and has income from fixed term deposits. He himself is running a tuition center, from where he earns a good amount of money. He is financially well off but he has to give maintenance amount to his divorced wife every month and sometimes gives money to his children as well.

‘Case F’ has two servants at his home to take care of his household work and maintenance of the house. They helps him to buy fresh fruits; vegetables and prepare food for him. He eats a very healthy vegetarian food. He prays every day to God for wellness of all human beings. He stated that he feels very lonely at home. He stated:

“It’s not a home it is just having a structure of four walls because no one is there who can make him to feel like home. I find many fingers pointed at me because I am stigmatized as a divorced person. My wife made my image worse in front of people and relatives too. But whenever I attend the meetings of the senior citizen, I feel very happy and connected with people. Otherwise my life is like a full stop. I feel isolated by the society and my relatives”.

Besides this fearful life, he started to feel lost and dejected then he joined senior citizen’s organization where he met with new people and started life afresh. He started attending all the meetings of this organization and resorted to singing to cope up with his depression. He also plays harmonium which gives him internal peace. He has made a good social circle through this organization. He is social and connected with other elderly persons through the senior citizen’s organization. He tries to keep himself fit by going on a regular walk, eating healthy food and having interactions with his friends. ‘Case F’ is scared of threat to his life by his ex-wife. He suggested that government should provide security and support system to single elderly male; they are neglected by the government in the case of security.
The researcher found that ‘Case F’ was living a fearful life due to harmful threats from his wife. He wanted a good and loving family. But he blamed his wife to ruin his dream to have a family. He felt loneliness in his house as it was not a house but only a structure of walls. He was lonely and less isolated.

**Case G**

‘Case G’ is a 60-year-old unmarried Hindu woman who belongs to a non-reserved caste background and is living in Chandigarh since her childhood. She is well educated. She did her B.Sc. Nursing degree and worked as a Nurse in a private hospital. ‘Case G’ earlier belonged to a middle class family but now belongs to upper class family. Her father was a teacher in a government school in Chandigarh and her mother was a house maker. Her father died when she was 43 years old and mother died when she was 52 years old. She has a sister who is living with her family in Punjab. ‘Case G’ was an independent, career oriented and ambitious woman.

When ‘Case G’ was 28 years old she became a care taker nurse of 48 years old divorced male who had heart ailment and was very ill. She came in contact with her patient through the hospital in which she was working. Her patient was very rich and a kind man. He had two children from her divorced wife but they were living with their mother. When her patient was ill none of his family members visited or took care of him. She served him for 8 years sincerely and with sympathy. She told that course of time in her patient got attracted towards her. She knew that he was a lone rich man who had nobody behind him. Her patient gave her the power of attorney of his property for her care and love and died after 2 years. Now, ‘Case G’ is the owner of his property. She is threatened by her patient’s children but they cannot do anything because the property is bequeathed to her in the will. This is how she became the owner of a huge property which included three big houses, a hotel in Delhi, shops, fixed deposits and other properties. But she stated:

“Now I realized that money can’t buy everything”.

After few years she started feeling lonely and depressed in her life. She had left her age of marriage behind because she had spent all her precious years of her life in looking after her patient. When she wanted to get married, she did not find any suitable match for her. She talked to her sister about her loneliness. Her sister offered her to adopt one of her two of sons to thwart her loneliness to which she readily agreed. At the time of adoption the son was 8 years old. She started taking care of her adopted son. She stated:

“My son became my life as he gave me a motive of live. I started living happily with my son. I gave him good education and a good life”.

Her adopted son went to Australia and settled there. He always asks her for money and every time she has to meet his demands. She also said:
“My relation with my adopted son is not good now. He treats me very badly because I am not his real mother. He lays to all my moveable and immovable property. My son always keeps his eyes on my bank accounts and transactions whenever he visits India and asks me for details. He doesn’t have any trust in me. I always feel loneliness in my home. My relatives don’t talk to me much. They only contact me whenever they need money. I feel isolated in this world”.

‘Case G’ s relatives (especially her mother’s brother and her cousins) were very angry with her because she was staying with an elderly man for his money only. But she claimed that she didn’t do anything wrong. She had a kind heart for her patient. For this reason he gave her all his property. She is so lonely and depressed that at the age of 60 years she is ready to marry. She is looking for a good match till now. She stated:

“My life has become like a golden glass which is empty from inside. I can buy expensive thing like- diamond rings, gold sets and other household things. But the money is worthless if you don’t have anybody with whom you can spend it happily”.

‘Case G’ adopted her sister’s son with a hope that he would remove her loneliness. But he ditched her. Now for the last 7 years she is living alone in a very big house. She is contented to live in a beautiful and well maintained house but it is not her choice to live alone. Being an old and single woman it is difficult to maintain the house and look after it. So she employed a maid who helps in the daily chores. The environment around her house is very good as she is living in a posh sector of Chandigarh. But she feels lonely at her home and outside also which is somehow affecting her mental health. She has lost her sleep. She reported that she is a diabetic and having regular medicines for this. Being a diabetic patient her physical health is also not good. She keeps herself busy in the house doing house hold chores with the help of her maid. Her financial condition is very good. She gets income from many sources like- fixed deposits, income from hotel, rent of shops and houses. She also gives loan to the people on interest. She stated:

“Kuchh log yeh soch kar paise wapis nahi dete ki mai ek akeli aurat hoon (Some people never return my money as they know that I am a single lady)”.

She told that she spends lakhs of rupees on entertainment to get happiness and to end her loneliness. It gives her temporary happiness but most of the times she feels lonely. She was completely lonely but less isolated. ‘Case G’ stated that she hardly gets any support from anyone if she needs. She further said that whenever she needs help she contacted those people who take loan from her and are trustworthy. They help her sometimes if they can. She is also afraid of the crime against senior citizens
which is increasing day by day and told that being a single lady it is very difficult to live alone. For her safety, she has installed a security system at her home. But living alone is not her choice. She stated:

“It is a curse on me. This is my destiny to live alone”.

She sometimes blames herself that if she would not have taken care of her patient so much nothing like this would have happened to her. She suggested that there should be support system for single elderly persons living alone.

The researcher found that ‘Case G’ was an independent unmarried woman who was earlier busy in her job of nurse. She got power of attorney of a huge property from her patient because she took a good care of him. Due to this care of her patient she was neglected by her own relatives. Her adopted son also left her. It was found that living alone being unmarried was the main reason for her loneliness.

Case H

‘Case H’ is 83 year-old divorced woman who belongs to non reserved Punjabi family. She shifted to Chandigarh after her marriage. She belongs to a rural and middle class background of Pakistan and shifted to Punjab after partition of India and Pakistan. She has studied up to high school. Her father was an agriculturalist and her mother was a house maker. She had an elder brother who lived in Chandigarh for many years. At the age of 19, she got married to her brother’s friend who was also living in Chandigarh. With her brother’s suggestion she got married to a well settled and educated man who did his graduation in Chandigarh. Her husband’s family was good to her. Her husband was doing a Government job in the Electricity Department of Chandigarh and was living in a joint family. She told that initial 8 years of her marriage passed off peacefully. But it was unfortunate that she could not give birth to any child. Her mother- in- law started blaming her for everything. From here the problems began in her life and she got divorced at the age of 37 years. She lived with her husband for 17 years and 1 year with her brother before her divorce. Her husband got married to another girl the same year they were divorced. According to her, she was divorced for dowry and because she could not give birth to a child. She has been divorced for over 46 years and living alone for more than 20 years in an 8 Marla house which was near to the market.

After the divorce, she started living with her brother who supported her emotionally and financially. She started giving tuition classes to school children at home to divert her mind from a tragic life. Her mother expired when she was 42 years old and her father expired when she was 51 years old. Her brother shifted to Sydney with his son. He left his home for her in which she is living. The house is doubled storied. She herself lives on the ground floor and first and second floors she has let out. She was getting Rs. 25,000 per month as rent of the house. It is a source of her
income and some money she is receiving as alimony from her divorced husband. Her financial condition is good because she is a single lady and can manage her expenses in her income. She has no other relatives living nearby. However, she has a good social network consisting of friends and neighbors. She reported being very healthy for her age. She spoke repeatedly about being self-reliant and a bold lady, who enjoys the social ties that she has built in her life. She seems to have kept an excellent balance of loneliness and sociability. She feels loneliness because she lives all alone in her house and does all the chores of the house herself. She has experienced a feeling of belongingness because she has a good social relation with her friends and neighbours. She is alone and feels isolated sometimes due to her advancing age and singlehood but is active at her home. She keeps herself busy in the house in various household chores like making food, dusting, and maintenance of the house. She spends most of her time talking on phone with her friends and relatives. She has good elderly friends with whom she shares her day to day problems and copes in this way up with her loneliness. She said:

“I always miss my family and my husband because I have good memories of living among them but now I have learnt to deal with their absence in my life. It’s almost 46 years that I have been living alone which has made me more adaptable to the situation. Now I have no regret of the past. I feel happy when I talk to my brother’s grandchildren”.

The researcher found that she was living happily in her life. Further she stated that she eats healthy food to keep her fit and active. She loves fruits very much. She is connected with the Association for senior citizens Chandigarh and Lioness club, Chandigarh. She told that she is very active and attended meetings of the association and club very frequently. She said:

“I feel insecure because I am living alone in the house. I am aware of police helpline number for senior citizens and women but still I feel scared. I used this helpline number once when I had a problem with my tenant which was solved by police promptly. I am lucky that my brother was living in Chandigarh. Otherwise my life was ruined by my in laws. Chandigarh is a well laid out and peaceful city where senior citizens can live happily. But still an elderly living in the family is happier than an elderly living alone because family gives a good moral and emotional support.”

‘Case H’ is very polite and kind hearted single lady. She found herself very lonely at her home. She found that if she doesn’t talk to her friends for a day she suffers anxiety and a feeling of loneliness. ‘Case H’ didn’t give any suggestion.
The researcher found that ‘Case H’ is a bold lady who faced divorce and living alone independently. The reason for her loneliness was the increasing age and stigma of divorcee which made her isolated somehow.

Case I

‘Case I’ is 69 year-old unmarried man who belongs to non reserved Hindu family and living in Chandigarh for 36 years. He belongs to the lower class background. He is a differently abled person as both of the legs were not functioning properly from his birth. He belongs to a rural background of Bihar and studied up to primary class in his native place. He had to leave his education due to his physical ailment. He has two siblings, a brother and a sister. Both of them are married. His brother lives in Bihar with his family. His sister moved to Chandigarh and is living with her family. He came to Chandigarh with his sister who has her own house. His sister was worried about his future and had sympathy with him. So she took him along with her after a few years of her marriage. He has a poor family background. He stated:

“I was living in my sister’s house. My brother in law didn’t have any objection to my residing with them in the initial days. My brother in law is working in a mechanic shop in sector 45. They gave food and shelter to me. But later on, they started thinking me a burden on them because they also didn’t have enough income. Their children were growing and their needs were also increasing. I am illiterate; differently abled; unable to work and had no source of income to support the whole family. I was wholly dependent on them. I decided to leave their house and had no idea where to go. I spent nights sleeping on the pavements. After few a days I met a person who became my friend and gave me a new hope of life. He was my savior. He also didn’t have family and was living in a jhuggi in sector 25 and used to earn some money by rag picking”.

‘Case I’ was helped by his new found friend who gave him food and shelter. Then, luckily he came in contact with the social welfare department of Chandigarh which provided him a wheel chair. It was like a windfall for him because he was unable to buy even a wheel chair for himself. It was a turning point in his life by which he became independent. He used to sell ice cream sitting in his wheel chair and started earning some amount of money. It was a struggle-full period for him. His life was also very hard. But he never lost hope. Soon he and his friend shifted to a one room set accommodation on rent. Meanwhile he received contact with his sister who felt very happy to know about him. With the help of Chandigarh administration he also got one room set LIG house. For some years it was a smooth sailing for him. He was residing with his friend. Two years ago his friend died and he is alone, again. He is growing older and is finding himself less energetic to work. He is still living in the one room accommodation and manages all the things by himself. He said:
“It is difficult for me to work but for my livelihood I have to work. I feel lonely at my home since I am living alone. My house is small but good for me. I am thankful to Chandigarh administration for providing me home”.

He visits the hospital alone whenever he needs to go the hospital and buys medicines himself. He told that physically he is fit but mentally he is a patient of anxiety and forgetfulness. To cope up with his mental ailment; he keeps himself busy. He has continued his work though unwillingly because he has no alternative to support himself. He cooks food for himself twice a day. He usually buys vegetables and fruits whenever he needs from the local street. He does all household chores by himself. He faces many problems in his day to day living. He is not able to handle the things properly due to his differently abledness. The condition of his house is very bad. He stated:

“Loneliness kills me. I am all alone because I don’t have any friend now. I miss my friend very much who helped me in my bad times. I spent half of my life with him. Sometimes I drink Alcohol when I miss my friend and feel very lonely”.

He has no pastime to cope with his loneliness. He is not connected to any association or organization to spend his time constructively because he neither has money or any inclination to join them. Due to his differently abledness he cannot walk and it is one of the hurdles in connecting to the people. Financially, sometimes he is not able to manage his expenses within his budget and borrows money from his sister. He sometimes gets social support from his neighbors. He feels socially isolated also because he is stigmatized as a handicapped and unmarried person. He is living alone in the house where there is no one to take care of him. He never felt loneliness in his entire life when his friend was alive but when his friend died he feels a big jolt and has remained depressed since then. ‘Case I’ had accepted the loneliness and isolation in his life. But he suggested that there should be support system for single elderly persons living alone especially for differently abled elderly.

The researcher found that ‘Case I’ didn’t feel any happiness in his life. He was a destitute who was dependent on others for his daily life. Earlier he was dependent on his sister then on his friend. But in the absence of his friend, he has been broken. The main reason for his loneliness was that that he was a destitute.

Case J

‘Case J’ is a 79 year-old divorced man who belongs to a non-reserved Sikh family and living in Chandigarh for more than 40 years. He shifted to Chandigarh with his family when he was a child. He has educated up to Graduation. He joined Army when he was 19 years old. At the age of 24 years he got married to a very beautiful 20 years old girl. His wife belonged to urban background. She studied up to high school from Ludhiana. After marriage she shifted to Chandigarh and became a
house maker. ‘Case J’ is the only child of his parents who belongs to an upper class family. He lives in a very big house which is built in two Kanal area. He served the nation for more than 20 years and retired as an Army Officer (Colonel). He got posted at many places in his army job which became a problem in his married life later on. His first station was at Jharkhand (1953) and then he was posted at Jammu in (1955).

In 1958, his wife gave birth to a son. But when his son was 4 years old his wife started creating problems in his life. Being his wife she wanted to stay with him. But he wanted his wife to stay with his aged parents and take good care of them. But his wife was not happy with this arrangement. She went to her parents’ home instead and started residing with them. He stated:

“My wife used to say that she is not here to take care of his parents and can’t be their servant anymore. My wife fought with me for not taking her along. So she filed a divorce. She left my son with my parents. I was in tension at that time because my son was very young”.

His parents took responsibility of taking care of his son to educate him. Neither his wife nor he could spend any time with the child and due to this, his bond with his son weakened. His son also joined Army in 1974. ‘Case J’ lost his father and then his mother in 1970s. He got retired from Army in 1973 and came back home but the home was empty because there was no one in the house. He started feeling lonely at home. His son got married in 1976. But after 2 years, due to his son’s bad behavior with his wife he also got divorced. His son’s wife could not stay with him and left him alone. His son got married twice but had marital discord with both of his wives and left him alone. He stated:

“My son becomes careless because of his socialization and upbringing remained faulty. After the separation from his mother no one was there to take proper care of him. Even I was busy in my job. Secondly, he also remained out of the house because of his army job and his wife was not ready to accept his absence for long. My son became very lonely and started drinking alcohol every day. He perishes became habitual of drinking alcohol. He got married again but this marriage also couldn’t work for him because he was alcoholic and used to beat his second wife. His second wife also took divorce from him and this time my son was broken completely”.

‘Case J’ tried to handle his son’s problem but he couldn’t. His son got terminated from his services for alcoholism while on duty and came back home. Because of his termination from the job, his son became more depressed and he started drinking more. He started fighting with him every day for money. Initially ‘Case J’ was very accommodating to him and used to give him money for his personal expenses. But later on, when ‘Case J’ found that his son was wasting money on Alcohol and drugs he became strict with him. Their relatives soured and they frequent
had conflicts which were increasing day by day. His son once tried to beat him for money in the street. ‘Case J’ became fed up with all these quarrels and disowned his son from his house and property. But his son became desperate to hurt his father after this incidence. His son abused him every day in the street because he disowned him. ‘Case J’ is now always in fear of his son. ‘Case J’ has four servants at his house who handle his household and outside work. He stated:

“My servants live happily in the house. I treat them like my sons. My servants take care of me a lot. They buy fruits, vegetables, medicines and other necessary things for me. My household and maintenance works are done by my servants. But still I miss my family especially my wife”.

‘Case J’s financial condition is very good. He gets income from many sources like pension, fixed deposits, agricultural income and interests. He has land in Punjab worth in crores and given his lands for cultivation on contracts and getting income from these lands. He told that he is having problem of depression, forgetfulness, hearing problem, eyesight problem, sleeping disorder and arthritis. For these problems he is taking medicines prescribed by his private doctor. He also told that his health is not so good due to aging. He stated that he feels very lonely at home and doesn’t go outside the house unless and until he has some work. He has to face many challenges in his day to day life because he was stigmatized as divorcee; father of an alcoholic and two times divorced son. He has voluntarily isolated himself. He spends his time sleeping during day, watching television and rest of the time he prays to God. He is insecure from his son. He wanted to have someone in his life at this age also because he didn’t get love in his life. ‘Case J’ didn’t give any suggestion.

The researcher found that ‘Case J’ was living in strained relation since many years; earlier with his wife then with his son. He faced loneliness and isolation because he was a divorced person which made him stigmatized and insecurity from his son forced him to become isolated. The major reason for his loneliness and isolation was his strained relations with his son.

ANALYSIS

The present study focused on the single elderly (widowed/never married/divorced) who were residing alone in Chandigarh at the time of study. Equal importance was given to both males and females to explain their experiences as they age and live alone. Further coping mechanisms used to overcome isolation and loneliness were discussed.

Since the first objective of the present study was to determine the socio-economic profile of the single elderly, it becomes imperative to focus on the profile for analysis.
## Table no. 6.1 Showing profile of the Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Case A</th>
<th>Case B</th>
<th>Case C</th>
<th>Case D</th>
<th>Case E</th>
<th>Case F</th>
<th>Case G</th>
<th>Case H</th>
<th>Case I</th>
<th>Case J</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>62 years</td>
<td>63 years</td>
<td>61 years</td>
<td>60 years</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Widow</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>General</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
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<td>Matriculate</td>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>Matriculate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Matriculate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
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<td>Retired</td>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>Helper at shop</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>House maker</td>
<td>Street vendor</td>
<td>Retired</td>
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<td>Rs. 65,000</td>
<td>Rs. 3,000</td>
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<td>Rs. 25,000</td>
<td>Rs. 2,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of living in Chandigarh</td>
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<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
<td>35 yrs.</td>
<td>32 yrs.</td>
<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
<td>36 yrs.</td>
<td>&lt; 40 yrs.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>&lt; 10 marla</td>
<td>1 kanal</td>
<td>I or 2 room set</td>
<td>I or 2 room set</td>
<td>1 kanal</td>
<td>1 kanal</td>
<td>&lt; 10 marla</td>
<td>I or 2 room set</td>
<td>1 kanal</td>
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</table>
PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age
There were 5 cases (i.e. case D, E, F, G and I) in the age group of 60-70 years, one case i.e. case J was in the late seventies and 4 cases (i.e. cases A, B, C and H) were above 80 years.

Gender
There were 5 male respondents (i.e. case A, E, F, I and J) and 5 female respondents (i.e. case B, C, D, G and H).

Marital status
Case A, B and D were widowed, 4 cases (i.e. case E, F, H and J) were divorced and 3 cases (i.e. case C, G and I) were of unmarried elderly.

Caste background
2 cases (i.e. case D and E) were from reserved caste and 8 cases (i.e. case A, B, C, F, G, H, I and J) belonged to general caste background.

Religious background
There were 7 respondents (i.e. case A, B, C, D, E, G and I) who belonged to Hinduism and 3 cases (i.e. case F, H and J) believed in Sikhism.

Background
There were 5 cases (i.e. case A, C, F, G and J) who belonged to urban background and 5 cases (i.e. case B, D, E, H and I) belonged to the rural background area.

Educational background
Case D was illiterate, 3 cases (i.e. case B, E and I) had studied up to matriculation, one case (i.e. case H) had education up to high school, 4 cases (i.e. case A, F, G and J) were graduates and one case (i.e. case C) had done post-graduation.

Occupational background
There were 4 cases (i.e. case A, C, F and J) engaged in Government- class I job before retirement. There was one case (i.e. case A) of a Banker, case C was Principal of school, case no. F was an Engineer and case no. J was a colonel in Army. One case (i.e. case G) was a Nurse engaged with a Private hospital. 3 cases (i.e. case D, E and I) did menial kind of work. Case D was working as a House Maid, Case E worked in a shop and Case I was ice-cream seller. There were 2 cases (i.e. case B and H) who never engaged in any kind of work. Case no. B was a widow and dependent on the house rent for her livelihood and Case H was a divorced female; was also dependent on house rent and alumni from her divorced husband.

Income
There were 4 cases (i.e. case B, D, E and I) had monthly income below Rs. 10,000 per month. There was one case (i.e. case H) getting income between Rs. 10,000-30,000
per month from house rent. There were 5 cases (i.e. case A, C, F, G, I and J) were getting more than Rs. 30,000 per month.

Social Class Background

There were 4 cases (i.e. case A, C, F, G and J) belonged to the upper class background. There were 2 cases (i.e. case B, H,) belonged to the middle class background. There were 3 cases (i.e. case D, E and I) belonged to the lower class background. The results of the present qualitative study show that most of the respondents belonged to high socio-economic background.

Type of living arrangement

There were 3 cases (i.e. case D, E and I) living in one or two room set living arrangement. There were 2 cases (i.e. case B and H) living in 10 Marla house. There was one case (i.e. case G) living in 1Kanal house. There were 4 cases (i.e. case A, C, F and J) living in more than 1Kanal house.

Duration of Living in Chandigarh

3 cases (i.e. case D, E and I) were living in Chandigarh for last 30 to 40 years. 7 cases (i.e. case A, B, C, F, G, H and J) were living in Chandigarh for more than 40 years. A majority of the respondents were living in the Chandigarh for more than 40 years.

Reasons for living alone

3 cases (i.e. case A, B and D) were living alone because they were widowed. Among these widowed respondents, Case A and Case D had strained relations with their children and case B was childless. Case A was a widower and was living alone by his own choice. Case B and D were widows who didn’t have any other option except living alone. Case no. B was childless and Case D was separated by her son and daughter-in-law. Death of the spouse was the major reason for living alone of these widowed respondents.

4 cases (i.e. case E, F, H and J) were divorced and living alone as they had nobody to live with them. Case E had no other option except living alone, Case F and J were having strained relations with their children whereas Case F was living alone by own choice.

Case C, G and I were unmarried and they had nobody to live with them. Earlier they were living with their parental family or friend but after their death they were on their own.

Duration of living alone

Case A, D, E, I and J were living alone for less than 10 years out of which Cases A and D had become widowed recently. Case E and J were divorced who were earlier living with their children but now their children live separately. Case I was unmarried who was earlier living with his friend after his death he was living alone. Case G and H were living alone for 10-20 years, Case G was unmarried female and
case H was divorced female. Case B, C and F were living alone for more than 20 years and Case B was widow, Case C was unmarried female and Case F was divorced male.

**Total no. of children (Male/Female)**

Case A had two sons and Case D who had one son. There was a widow who did not have any child. Among the divorced respondents there were 2 cases (i.e. case E and F) had two children (a son and a daughter), Case J had one son. Case H didn’t have any child. Out of the divorced respondents it was found that all respondents had children except the female respondents (i.e. case H). It was found that there was one case (i.e. Case G) was unmarried and had one adopted son.

**Information about children**

Children of all of the respondents who reported that they had children were married except one case (i.e. case J). Case J’s son was divorced. Case A had two sons; one of his sons shifted to Canada and another son was living in Chandigarh but had his own family and house. Case D’s son was living in the same house but had separate floor. Case E’s daughter was married in Sonipat and his son was living in Chandigarh with his own family. Case F’s daughter was married in Delhi and his son was unmarried. Case G’s son was unmarried and living in Australia. Case J’s son was divorced and living in Chandigarh.

**Relations with the children**

Except one case (i.e. case E) who was widower and had normal relations with his children, all the other respondents (i.e. case A, D, F, G and J) had bad and abusive relations with their children. The results indicate that a majority of the respondents had strained relations with their children.

**Relations with the siblings**

Siblings of 4 cases (i.e. case B, G, H and I) were alive and they had cordial relations with them.

**Help in daily activities**

4 Cases (i.e. case A, F, G and J) had servants who helped them in their daily activities.

**PROBLEMS FACED BY SINGLE ELDERLY PERSONS**

The single elderly persons faced a number of problems such as financial, lack of support, loneliness etc. Health is one of the major problems faced by elderly persons.

**Physical health status**

There were 3 cases (i.e. case C, F and H) who rated good physical health. Case C was an 82 year old unmarried female; Case F was 61 years old divorced male and Case J was 83 year old divorced female. There were 3 cases (i.e. case A, G and I) who
rated their health as average out of which Case A was 83 years old widower; Case G was a 60 years old unmarried female and case I was a 69 years old unmarried male. There were 4 cases (i.e. case B, D, E and H) who reported poor health out of which case B was 86 years old and case D was 62 years old and both were widows. Case E was 62 years old and H was 79 years old and both were divorced males. Such findings indicate age and gender don’t play significant role in determining physical health.

**Physical ailments**

Case D and J were suffering from Arthritis, Case B had heart problem, Case E had respiratory problem and Case G had diabetes. All respondents reported a natural deterioration in physical health due to their age like- dental problem; poor eye sight, poor hearing etc. and most of them (i.e. Case B, E, G and J) were taking medicines for their ailments, Case D however not taking any medicine because of her poor financial condition.

**Mental health status**

All of the cases reported poor mental health but only Case F and Case J were on medication for their mental ailments. Insomnia, forgetfulness and depression were mentioned by all the respondents.

**Financial conditions of the respondents**

Not all cases reported finances as problem. There were 4 cases (i.e. case B, D, E and I) who reported poor financial conditions. Case D and I were getting pension from Social Welfare Department, Chandigarh.

**Loneliness among respondents**

All cases reported loneliness as they were living alone and they had no one to talk to. All of them irrespective of socio-economic background reported loneliness which shows that socio-economic profile doesn’t have impact on loneliness. Living alone has affected the social life of the respondent as they had limited contacts. Lack of mobility due to deterioration of health with increase in the age also made them vulnerable to loneliness.

**Social Support**

5 cases (i.e. case B, C, E, H and I) reported that they get support but not every time. There was only one case (i.e. case A) who reported good social support system as he had caring neighbours. He had joined religious organization from where he could get support. 4 cases (i.e. case D, F, G and J) reported absence of social support system. Those respondents who had un-cordial relations with their children and siblings reported lack of support. It was found that those cases who had joined
organization or association and had frequent interaction with the members of these organization were supported more than those who had limited social interaction and social life.

Social isolation

4 cases (i.e. case B, C, D and J) reported that they were completely isolated. It was found that case B and case C were isolated by their own choice; both of the cases were females. Case B didn’t have active social life because she didn’t want any sympathy from others, whereas case C, being an unmarried aged woman, isolated herself. Case D was a widow who was forced to be isolated because no one cared about her due to her age and was regarded as a burden. Case D was a divorced man who had strained relations with his son; due to security reasons from his son he had isolated himself. The results show that age and marital status were responsible for leading isolation among the elderly. The gender differences were noticed as it was found that most of the elderly women isolated themselves. Case B, D and J reported bad health as one of the reasons for their isolation. The security reason was emerged as important cause for isolation.

Issues of physical safety

7 cases (i.e. case A, B, C, F, G, H and J) reported that they feel insecure as they were living alone. 3 cases (i.e. case D, E and I) reported that they were not afraid of their security. Most of the women respondents were afraid of their security because they were living alone and were aged. Those who belonged to the lower class had no security issue whereas respondents from the high socio economic classes were afraid of their safety even though they had installed a security system at their homes.

Social network

4 Cases (i.e. case A, E, F, H) had good social network. 7 Cases (i.e. case B, C, D, G, I and J) had poor social network.

COPING MECHANISM

Praying to God to cope with problems emerged as major mechanism used by most of the respondents. There were 8 cases (i.e. case A, B, C, D, F, H, I and J) who reported that they pray to cope with their loneliness and social isolation. There were 5 cases (i.e. case B, C, D, I and J) who reported that they sleep in order to kill their time. There were others who engaged themselves in social and leisure activities to cope with problems such as watching T.V., meeting neighbours and friends, going for walk. 5 cases (i.e. case C, F, G, H and J) reported that they watch television; 4 cases (i.e. case A, F, G and H) reported that they were engaged in social activities; 3 cases
(i.e. case A, E and H) reported that they go for walk. Others kept themselves busy in daily chores such as maintaining house, gardening etc. that helped them to cope with stress and tension of social isolation. 2 cases (i.e. case E, G and H) mentioned that keep themselves busy in maintenance of the house. They were keeping themselves busy so they don’t sit idle and think about various problems.

**SUGGESTION GIVEN BY THE RESPONDENTS**

There were 5 cases (i.e. case B, E, F, G and I) who suggested that there should be some support system for those who are living alone especially single women and differently abled persons. 3 Cases (i.e. B, C and F) suggested that there should be security measures for single elderly living alone. 2 cases (i.e. case B and D) also suggested a financial help to be given to single elderly persons. Case A suggested that the court matters of elderly persons should be solved on priority basis. Case H and J didn’t give any suggestion. After giving the analysis of different cases under study a detailed discussion was carried out.

**Discussion**

In present study an attempt has been made to explore the subjective aspect of single elderly live alone. Single elderly who live alone face different circumstances as compared to elderly who live with their spouses or children. Further, variation in marital status brings about drastic change in the personalities of elderly. According to Pinquart (2003) there is a higher level of loneliness among unmarried men than unmarried women. De Jong Gierveld et al., (2011) reported that loneliness was more in divorced and widowed elderly living alone with deteriorating health. It was found that women living alone are more likely to face loneliness following the death of the spouse because being widowed they live alone and face longer period of decline in health (Havens et al., 2004). Burholt and Dobbs (2012) stated that elderly living in urban areas are more likely to face problem of loneliness than elderly living in rural areas. Results of qualitative study indicate that all the respondents irrespective of their marital status, sex, or class background experienced loneliness. Loneliness affects the quality of life of people. The findings correlate with previous studies in this field and show the importance of social contacts and meaningful activity for elderly. Being alone was equal to being isolated for these elderly, having no company for desired activities. In the last phase of their lives they need companionship. Those who have children but not staying with them have different set of problems and those who never had family of their own repent otherwise. Family is an integral part of everyone’s life. Elderly are most happy with family life. Cultural studies show that elderly persons prefer to be in their own homes and communities (WHO, 2011). The study has highlighted how absence of family creates a vacuum in the lives these of elderly.
The results show that living alone that too in old age is not an easy task. The single elderly face multiple problems and social isolation is the major problem. According to Age well Foundation (2010), elderly persons in the age group of 80 years and above face more isolation in comparison to elderly persons in the younger age groups of elderly. Results of the qualitative study negate such findings. Studies found that loneliness is more common among women (Victor et al., 2005; Savikko, 2008). Results of qualitative study disapprove such findings.

The results also show that recently widowed persons are more at the risk of loneliness and isolation which keeps on increasing with increase in the duration of being widowed. The present study supports Wenger and Burholt (2004) who reported risk of isolation increases with increasing length of widowhood. It is argued that greater levels of loneliness exist among single elderly living alone than those elderly who live with their spouse (Bhatia et al. 2007; Bikson and Goodchilds 1978; Greenfield and Russell, 2011). Our qualitative analysis disapprove such findings.

According to Murphy (1982), working class elderly persons were more likely than others to become isolated. Results of qualitative study disapprove such findings. The results show that those respondents who were from the upper class profile have isolated themselves inside their house due to their security reasons. They were connected with the society only through the different organization and association. They have servants or care takers to take care of them and do their household chores. Respondents from middle social class were active inside the house but not much connected with the society because they found rejection from the society. Those respondents who were from the lower social class were more vulnerable because they do not have enough money to spend a good life. Overall, it can be concluded that the situation of the single elderly respondents is vulnerable whether he/she belong to upper, middle or lower class background. Everyone has to face or deal with loneliness and social isolation. Results of the qualitative study indicated that elderly person irrespective of age, gender, marital status and social class face loneliness and social isolation.

The present study focused not only on profile of the single elderly persons living alone but also highlighted their problems. They face numerous problems while living alone and their problems are varying with difference in age, sex, marital status and social class of single elderly. Present qualitative study found that there is not much difference in the situation of elderly persons according to marital status. Results supports Namkee (2008), who found that there is not any difference except the profile of the divorced and never-married elderly groups rather than from different marital statuses.

According to Brody (1970) and Cottrell (1974) the emotional bonds with adult children play an important role in the well-being of the elderly parents. Results of
qualitative study indicated that those elderly people who were having un-cordial relations with their children were facing more problem of loneliness. It was found that those respondents who mentioned that they had strained relations with their children were more vulnerable. The strained relations with children and siblings emerged as major factor for making single elderly lonely or isolated. Cicirelli, (1995) also found that relationships with siblings can contribute to satisfaction in life, higher morale, fewer depressive symptoms, psychological well-being, and a greater sense of emotional security in old age.

Lack of Social support influences the health of single elderly person who live alone. Qualitative data show that more respondents who were lonely and living alone had poor mental health, thus endorse Singh and Mishra (2009); Mui (1998); Russel and Taylor (2009).

Those respondents who belonged to the middle and lower class background were facing financial problems. It was found that female respondents were more at the risk of facing financial problems. Findings endorse Nair (1980) who indicated that widows, divorced and unmarried women were the poorest among the elderly. The results show that lack of security was main cause of concern for high class single elderly especially for unmarried females living alone. Single elderly persons from the lower class background were not concerned about their security as they had nothing to lose.

It is established fact that absence of active social life makes elderly dull and isolated. Fratiglioni et al., (2000) argued that elderly are more prone to social isolation due to limited mobility, reduced contact with friends and family and low social activity. Qualitative data support Fratiglioni et al., (2000). Daily activities such as watching television, listening to music and reading, as well as more social activities like talking on the telephone, shopping or visiting others seemed to keep the elders diverted and busy and to deal with the loneliness. Results endorse Pettigrew & Roberts (2008).

**Conclusion**

It is a bitter truth of modern society that many people live alone in old age, often with significant health and other challenges. Living alone may contribute to social isolation that has negative influences on health and wellbeing. There can be many reasons for living alone such as death of spouse, failed marriage or not getting married. Living alone in old age is problematic because health problems in old age erode independent functioning creates dependency on others. In modern society there is a change in family functions. Family no more strongly acts as a support system for the elderly because of the changed value system of the younger generation. The value orientation among the younger generation is more individualistic than towards filial
piety. On the other hand, the elderly in India have traditional orientation and they have very high investments in the ideals of family. Their social reality has not been constructed outside family. It comes as shock to them when they are forced to live alone. Nevertheless they don’t dissociate themselves with their family and look forward for support from their kinsmen be that children or siblings or ex-spouses. The elderly are bound to suffer because of the absence of anyone to interact with on a daily basis and to turn to in times of need can be major issues for older people.