

# From Lockdown to Loneliness: The Plight of Elderly People in South Kolkata of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, West Bengal

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**Abstract:** The process of ageing is a universal and inevitable phenomenon. Moreover, the individual aged person in this world can suffer from different issues like health-related, demographic, economic and social, psychological issues etc. Against these backdrops, the present paper opts to scrutinise the multifaceted behavioural and social issues of elderly people in this present critical juncture of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown effect. Based on simple random and snowball sampling, 100 elderly people were surveyed from different pockets of Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), West Bengal. The samples were selected from various social domains, including those living in complexes, semi-complexes, standalone apartments, ancestral homes, middle-class residential zones, etc., to unfold the dynamicity of elders' loneliness upon the impact of covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown effect. With the help of the UCLA score, elders' loneliness or isolated situation during Covid-19 has been uncovered. The present study revealed that the covid 19 pandemic and the lockdown effect have tremendously augmented the elders' loneliness and enhanced their socio-psychological problems.

**Keywords:** Ageing, Elder generation, Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown, Loneliness, Family pattern, Gender disparity

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## Introduction

The older generation of our society is the inevitable consequence of population ageing. The World Health Organization (WHO) has observed that between 2015 and 2050, the global population of over 60 years will approximately double from 12 to 22 per cent and thereby, senior people will outnumber the proportion of children. In the case of India, the segment of the older population was 91.6 million in 2010, but the projected proportion of the elderly population will hike to 158.7 million in 2025 (DESA-UN Report, 2008). West Bengal will also experience the same soon. According to the technical group of Population Projections, National Commissions on Populations, the state will experience a considerable rise of 60+ population comparing the total population over the next few years. It has been projected that there will be a rise of 26% of the total population in 2026 compared to the base year of 2001, whereas 60 years above population will rise to 170 % at the same time (BKPAI-UNFPA Report, 2014). Another level down, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) is already considered ageing city as the proportion of aged people is much higher than in any other metro city (Times of India, 2015). The article, published in the Times of India (2015), reveals that Kolkata holds a proportion of 11.76% of the elderly population, whereas Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi consist of 9.9%, 8.9% and 7.8% of the elderly population, respectively.

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The sophisticated medical treatments and improved lifestyles allow people to live longer and lead to escalating population ageing much faster than in the past. Longevity allows human beings to enjoy the world for more time, but it also invites several social, economic, and other issues. Mane (2016) has highlighted several issues of the elderly generation in the Indian context. According to him, the emerging social problems for senior people are the lack of proper infrastructure, change in family structure, lack of social support and social inequality, health issues, etc. Amiri (2018), on the other hand, has tried to explain the problems of an ageing population concerning Indian traditions. With the changing time, older people are becoming inactive, dependent, sick and weak economically, physically and psychologically, which leads to several social and economic problems. Most of the above-referenced social problems are supposed to be interfered with by the Government to some extent, but the Government cannot modify the changing family space or living arrangements, instead is a process of society. In India, a rich family structure is a prominent societal character. Earlier, the joint family pattern was a conventional family structure. This family structure helps the member become mentally, physically and psychologically strong. In a post-modernisation era, Indian society faces a trend of disintegration of the joint family pattern. The disintegration does not mean that people are rejecting traditional culture, but the circumstances and conditions are responsible for this (Times of India, 2020). So it is an urgent need to study the impact of this change on older people in society. This paper also aims to concentrate on the issues of the older generation of our society to study the behavioural pattern and influence of present living arrangements on them. Another dimension will be added to this study as the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has occurred worldwide. The lockdown and quarantine period has a significant impact on everyone's lifestyle. The older generation is not excluded from everyone, and it is pretty evident that the age group above 60 years who have been affected differently. Grolli et al. (2020) have stressed older people's psychiatric and neurological problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors have highlighted the issues that older people in our society have a silent fear feeling, and those already suffering from mental vulnerability are exposed to this feeling. Pant and Subedi (2020) have discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the older generation from several perspectives, like social isolation, financial hardships, maintaining dignity during the pandemic, etc.

Against this background, the present paper is a submission to explain the problem of elderly people in general and during the covid-19 pandemic, particularly the subsequent lockdown phase. The paper has been broadly divided into four sub-sections. The first section provides a glimpse of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The issues of elderly people, in general, are the domain of the second section, while the third section explores the issues of elderly people in the Covid-19 lockdown phase. Finally, the fourth section concludes the paper.

## **Literature Review**

Kumar (2011) stated that 18.7% of seniors in 2006 stayed alone or with a spouse, while only 9.0% in 1992. The paper has highlighted the issues and provided solutions to some extent in the form of ongoing government policies in several sectors for older people. The authors have suggested a need to build intergenerational bonding focusing on reciprocity.

Venn et al. (2011) have highlighted the gendered dimension of ageing populations. The authors have opted to study the ageing population while discussing both the male and female perspectives. The paper opted for a theoretical approach to studying older people and evaluated how the gender perspective has been neglected. The authors have also highlighted that the living conditions of elders may differ with the status of a partnership and a gender bias issue.

Jadhav et al. (2013) have attracted attention to the living arrangements of the elderly in India among the BKBPAAI surveyed states. The total surveyed sample in seven states is 9852. The gender dichotomy has revealed that a higher proportion of older women live alone than older men. The

reasons identified by the authors are either not having children or children living elsewhere because of migration or marriage. The dominant type of living arrangements are widowed older women with no education and who never worked, who seem to live with children and grandkids. On the other hand, 15% of widowed women and men have reported that they live alone.

The challenges and issues of the ageing population in the Indian context have been explained by Devi (2019). The highlighted issues for older generations are lack of infrastructure, changing family structure, lack of social support, elder abuse, and social protection. When speaking about changing family structure and lack of social support, the author asserted that the emerging prevalence of nuclear families leads to exposure to emotional, physical and financial insecurity.

Banerjee (2020) highlighted that senior people are more susceptible to mental health problems related to such pandemics, leading to exceptional care for geriatric mental health during this crisis. Regarding mental health during pandemics, health anxiety, panic, adjustment disorders, depression, chronic stress and insomnia are the significant offshoots. In addition, social distancing, through a major strategy to fight COVID-19, is also a major cause of loneliness, particularly in settings like nursing care or old-age homes, which is an independent risk factor for depression, anxiety disorders and suicide.

The global pandemic is going on. De Pue(2021) has attempted to identify the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on older adults' well-being and cognitive functions. Based on surveys, the authors concluded that COVID-19 significantly impacted older adults. It has been observed that there was a significant decrease in well-being, activity level, and sleep quality during the COVID-19 period as compared to before COVID-19.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of our study are as follows:

- a. To chalk out the behavioural and social issues of the older generation of our society and the relations between them;
- b. To find out how far the elders get affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic and whether it has augmented their loneliness upon the lockdown.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions of the present study are as follows:

- a. What are the social and psychological issues of the elder population living in Kolkata Municipal Corporation?
- b. Is there any gender difference regarding the socio-psychological issues of elders?
- c. Whether the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown accentuated the loneliness of the elderly?

### **Data Sources and Methodology**

The research work is based on a suitable methodological approach with types of observation, records, literature and their critical analysis to perceive the absolute as well as relative dimensions of the work. The study is empirical and analytical. The target group of the study was people above 60 years of chronological age, selected mainly from the Kolkata Municipal Area (KMC) in general and the South Kolkata region in particular through the Random Sampling and Snowball Sampling Method. The total sample size of the present study is 100 has been selected from a middle-class residential zone. The sample is selected to research the old age population of various categories, such as those residing in apartments, or their

**Table 1: Detailed account of sampling**

Area	Total number of respondents	Sampling Method		Way of collecting data
		Simple random sampling	Snowball sampling	
		Number of Respondents		
Behala	30	26	4	Telephonic Interview, Google Form of Questionnaire Distribution, Questionnaire Survey.
Thakurpukur-Joka Area under KMC	32	18	14	
Tollygaunj	24	18	6	
Baguiati	5	1	4	
Bhowanipur	9	8	1	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

ancestor's houses etc. In a nutshell, the respondents have been selected from a middle-class residential zone. In this case, simple and sophisticated quantitative statistical techniques that are considered useful in this work have been adopted to find out the issues of the elderly generation and the loneliness of elders during the Covid-19 Lockdown period. Various statistical techniques such as the Chi-Square test, t-Test and descriptive statistics have been used to unfold the gravity of the problem. To unveil the different dimensions of issues of the elderly population, the Chi-Square Test has been done on a sample of 100 respondents using SPSS software (Version 26.0).

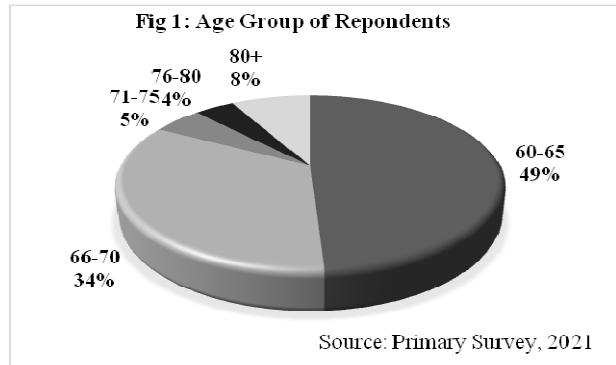
Likewise, to test the association between the loneliness of elderly generations before COVID-19 and after the COVID-19 Pandemic, purposive sampling has been adopted for convenience on 42 respondents. Again, the UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) loneliness scale (Version 3) has been applied. These 42 samples have been selected among the 100 respondents based on the average UCLA scale of loneliness score.

### **Socio-demographic profile of the respondents**

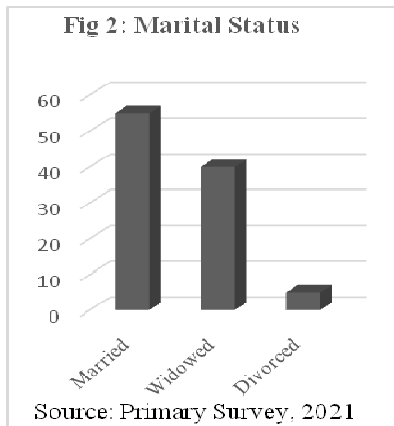
In order to have an analysis of the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown effect, first of all, the socio-demographic profile of the respondents needs to be explored.

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**Ageing Pattern:** The respondents' ageing pattern (Fig:1) is quite diverse. Nearly half of the respondents belong to the 60-65 age group. This age group is pretty interesting as they are recognised as senior citizens in society and have entered another phase of their life. The probable dichotomy would be more visible if respondents belonged to economically productive units. The next major (34%) age group of respondents was 66-70. This age group have experienced old age for some years, and the perspective will be slightly different from the previous. The other age groups are 71-75(5%), 76-80(4%), and 80+ (8%) aged people, which share the rest of the percentage.



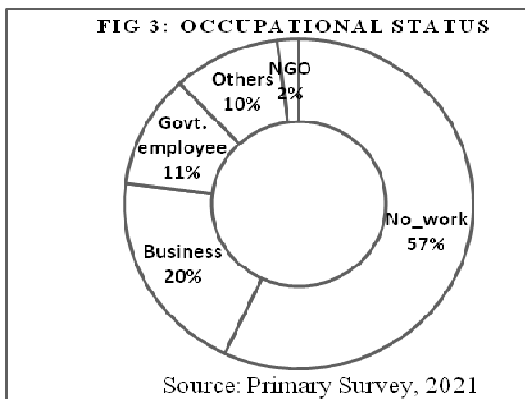
**Marital Status:** Most respondents (Fig:2) are lucky enough to be with their spouses, while some are not. Around 55% of people are married, while nearly 40% are widowed among the total sample. Though divorce is uncommon among aged people, a very small proportion (5%) is divorced. No respondents were unmarried.



**Educational Status:** Nearly one-fourth of the respondents have graduated. The next major education level of respondents are the Matric level and Higher Secondary level. Finally, the Post-Graduation level is obtained by 17% of respondents.

**Occupational Status:** It has been revealed from the primary survey (Fig:3) that as senior citizens, most of the respondents are now retired or have been full-time homemakers all along. Naturally, the percentage of no-work groups gets a larger share (57%). However, it is a good sign that 43% of respondents are connected with direct economic activity, including business or government sectors and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

**Family Pattern:** From a very objective point of view, the proportion of joint family residents (23%) is significantly low comparing nuclear family residents (57%). The family structure plays a vital role for older populations. In Indian culture, a family does not mean a single household. Sometimes, multiple households may belong to one family. For them, the family does not mean separate households all the time but a feeling by which, despite having separate households, they can be considered one family (Shah, 1999). In old age, people try to coexist with their family members and enjoy the company of grandchildren, cousins, sons and daughters or other family members. For that, the family pattern and the number of family members also play a major role. The picture is clear from the family pattern of the respondents as the proportion of



joint families is relatively lower than the nuclear family. Nearly 77% of respondents have family members of less than 5, whereas 23% live in a comparatively large family with members of more than five people.

**Family Income Status:** The family income may reveal the living conditions of the elders. The study shows that around 47% of the total sample belongs to the higher-income group, whereas a very low percentage (10%) belongs to the relatively lower-income group.

The characteristics of the sample (Table 2) can be suitably captured using descriptive statistics. Here, the attention goes to specific variables bearing higher Coefficient of Variation values. First, the educational status of the respondents is highly deviated from the mean value (3.14), having an SD value of 1.86. This means that most of the respondents have a graduation degree, but the CV value (59.19) says that some respondents have a different level of education like Matric, Higher, Secondary and Post-graduation. In addition, some respondents have vocational training. The next variable which seems to be important is the no. of family members. The mean value (4.22) represents that most of the respondent's families were nuclear families having four members or fewer. Though the CV (59.20) is not high enough, there is also some variability among family members. From the observations, 80% of the nuclear family reside, and the rest reside in a joint family. Finally, considering the pandemic situation, the variable whether the routine has changed or not, the mean value (1.67) says that indeed there is a change in the routine of elders, though there is a small deviation (0.79); CV value (47.43) is quite variable. In our society, the older generation is the retired section, mainly away from economic activity, though there are exceptions. However, as 57% of respondents in our sample are categorised under the 'no work' category, it is clear that they are already confined to their houses. Thus, it explains that after the Covid-19 lockdown, the respondents were divided into two halves of opposite responses; i.e., most of them agree that the routine has changed, but the other half do not think there is a change.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation		Skewness
	Statistic	Statistic	CV	Statistic
Age	67.46	7.56309	11.21122	1.854
<b>Education</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>1.85875</b>	<b>59.19586</b>	0.986
Marital_stat	2.86	0.97463	34.07797	0.287
Family_type	1.75	0.43519	24.868	-1.172
<b>Family_mem</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>2.09173</b>	<b>49.56706</b>	1.431
Income	2.69	1.02193	37.98996	-0.211
Work_b4_60	1.46	0.53973	36.96781	0.555
Grandchild	1.67	0.68246	40.86587	0.527
<b>routinechnng_after pan</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>0.79207</b>	<b>47.42934</b>	1.661
UCLA_Norm	46.92	7.84661	16.72338	0.151
UCLA_Pan	47.68	8.31438	17.43788	0.372

Source: Computed by the Authors, 2021

### Issues of Elder Generation

In a rapidly changing world, senior people may find themselves isolated from society and thus leading to different kinds of issues. The inability to cope with changing values and lifestyles, social isolation, and social adjustment are some of the social issues of the older generation in our society. A generation gap or intergenerational conflict is another rising issue for elders, ultimately leading to the former. These social issues also cause psychological complexities like depression, anxiety, lack of purpose, and loneliness. In addition, the changing family pattern and family values can enhance the problem.

In this section of our study, these broad social issues have been discussed at a minor level. The observations are aimed to unveil the different issues of the elderly, like what kind of dimensions are there in case of living arrangements etc. The elders of our society have some particular needs. Proper housing, along with favourable living arrangements, is one of them. The increasing old-age population needs urgent care and support, especially from family members.

On the other hand, an insufficient public pension and social security system is holding back planning for the elderly regarding living arrangements. (Jadhav et al., 2013). Added to this, the changing family structure is also playing a significant role. In this section, Chi-squares (table 3) on some particular variables can help us to understand the situation. The test has been taken from a gender and family-type perspective.

**Table 3: Living arrangements of elders and relationship with different variables**

Influenced variable	Influencing variable	Chi-square value	Significance level
Willing to go to Old Age home	Gender	6.570	P >0.05
Willing to go to Old Age home	Family Type	18.690	P <0.05
Missing Joint Family pattern	Gender	25.587	P < 0.05
Missing Joint Family pattern	Family Type	15.090	P < 0.05
Cope up with a grandchild	Gender	9.140	P <0.05

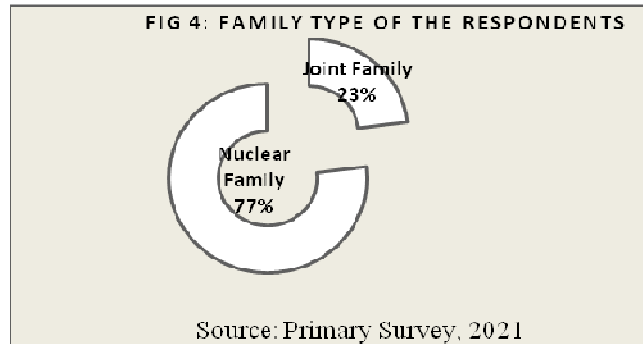
Source: Computed by the authors, 2021

Concerning the relationship between the willingness to go to an old age home and gender, the respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement that an old age home can provide them with a tension-free life. Around 48% of male respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, whereas nearly 20% of male and 31% of female respondents seemed undecided. Interestingly, a small percentage of males and females, 8% and 10.7%, respectively, strongly agreed with the statement. However, the perspective completely changed as and when the family type came into the picture. Having a significant value ( $p < 0.05$ ), it is clear that the difference in family patterns and the willingness to go to old age homes can differ. Here, Joint Family and Nuclear Family are the two main family types. Three among five respondents belonging to a joint family have shown their unwillingness to be at the old age home.

On the contrary, around 23% of people from nuclear families agreed that an old age home could provide them with a tension-free life. This is because the joint family members are used to living together, and this acts as a support system for all the age groups. On the contrary, elders from nuclear families find themselves lonely at the end of the day and seek an opportunity to live together. In this situation, an old age home or community home can provide them with a safe feeling. In an

article in *The Hindu*, Vidya Venkat (2017) has provided that the breakdown of the joint family can be considered one of the key reasons today's elderly are on their own. The larger family always acts as a support system for aged people, but changes in sociological patterns have taken that away.

In Orient culture, the family pattern acts as an influential factor on elders. Here, the study has been done on gender and family type. From the cross-tabulation, the female respondents are more prone to miss the joint family pattern, but most male respondents seem undecided about it. From the family type viewpoint, the nuclear family members naturally miss the joint family pattern the most. Kumar (1999) has already stated that the institutional concept of family in Indian society is a joint family system. Considering nostalgia, people are naturally sensitive to joint family patterns. In developed countries, older people will likely stay alone and depend on themselves. Comparing the condition of developed countries with developing countries like India, we may observe a different picture. Hugo and Williamson (2011) discussed in their 'Global Ageing' article that the older generation in developing countries relies on their family members for survival and well-being. Most adult people are likely to stay with their children and family. They want to see their descendants daily, which interprets our observation very precisely. Most of the respondents live in a nuclear family. They are confined in that familiar place and do not want to go to another place by easily giving up their comfort zone.



Last but not least, it is vital to study intergenerational relationships. Between grandparents and grandchildren, about one-fourth of male Respondents and one-fifth of female respondents agreed that they could cope with their grandchildren. On the other hand, around 35% of female respondents cannot understand their grandchildren that much, against 8% of male respondents. The observations gradually reveal that elderly people in our society are quite family-oriented. Once when the joint family system was ubiquitous in society, the older generation was surrounded by the next generations. Filial responsibilities were socially common and considered a duty for the younger generation. Older adults who need assistance to remain at home can only be possible by relying on others.

In the contemporary scenario, the traditional family pattern, i.e. the extended and joint family system, is changing due to factors such as intra-migration, inter-migration and transnational flow, the decline in fertility, and an increase in life expectancy. Earlier, the grandparents usually died before their grandchildren reached adulthood. This could be explained through an upright pyramid, where children are at its base and grandparents are at the apex. However, the family pattern started to change at the beginning of the '80s and '90s. Nowadays, the dominant family structure can be explained through an inverted pyramid where children are at the peak and great-grandparents, or grandparents are at the base. In addition, the fertility pattern and social concerns have changed the number of family members. The changing family pattern and the change in family members lead to the evolution of living arrangements. Sreerupa et al. (2018) explain living arrangements in terms of the type of family in which the elderly live, the headship they enjoy, the place they enjoy or the place they stay in and the people with whom they stay.

In other words, the term living arrangement refers to one's household structure (Palloni, 2000). The 2011 census data uncovered that the number of households had increased substantially in the last decade, and the number of persons per household has decreased. This phenomenon can be explained



by the combination of declining fertility, migration, and nuclearisation of families are three probable reasons for such reduction. Talking about introducing the nuclear family, an article in the Hindustan Times (2011) reported that it ultimately leads to a lonely life for elders, which may harm their emotional and physical well-being. A survey conducted by Agewell Foundation has found out that 60.54% of interviewed older persons were found living alone or residing in nuclear families.

Interestingly, about 45% of respondents said they would like to live in a joint family, but their circumstances do not allow them to do so. A similar situation has been portrayed in our study. The maximum number of respondents (Fig: 4) are from the nuclear family (77%) and have less than five family members. From our observation, it can be said that about 66.7% of female misses the joint family pattern immensely, whereas 20% of male elders miss the joint family system. Moreover, 41% of respondents from our sample expressed an intense disappointment regarding their present family type, i.e. the nuclear family and concluded that they miss the joint family pattern. Cost of living efficiency and mental and physical support is the main reason for missing the joint family pattern.

**Banking and device operations:** This section of the study (table 4) has highlighted the issues of the elder generation related to exposure to the outer world. First, consider handling banking inquiries efficiently in light of the gender dimension. It is shown here that the relationship between gender and the operation of banking facilities is significant, i.e. gender can influence the efficiency of banking facility operation. Considering the cross-tabulation of the variables, we can see that 55.6% of male respondents strongly agreed that they usually operate their banking activities, whereas only 20% of female respondents strongly agreed to do the same.

**Table 4: Operation of banking enquiries, devices and elder people**

Influenced variable	Influencing variable	Chi-square value	Significance level
Operating Banking Enquiries	Gender	24.946	P<0.05
Device Handle	Gender	50.573	P <0.05

Source: Computed by Researcher, 2021

The discussion should be started with a fundamental question. Can all the citizens of India, irrespective of gender and age, access the banking facility? The answer is complicated. Why? The work of Pallavi Chavan (2008) has shown that there is prevailing gender inequality in banking services. The article is based on the data from 2006 though it is still relevant for our study. In this article, the number of bank deposits per 10000 population in rural and urban areas by gender (table 5) has been provided as follows:

**Table 5: Number of bank deposits per 10000 population in rural and urban areas by gender (2001)**

	Women	Men	All
Rural	1702	4726	3256
Urban	3338	8278	5938
Number of bank deposits per 10000 population in rural and urban areas by gender (2006)			
Rural	1535	4611	2774
Urban	3292	8703	6134

Source: RBI, Basic Statistical Returns, Various Issues, GOI (2001)

From the above table (table: 5), we can see that the disparity between male bank account holders and female bank account holders is eye-catching. Certain other indicators of access to banking services also show the extent of disparity between men and women. In 2006, the number of bank deposits per 10,000 women was less than half the number for men. For every 100 bank deposits in the name of men in the same year, there were only 35 bank deposits in the name of women. From our field investigation, there is a significant influence of gender on banking work operations. The men handle their bank accounts and all other issues by themselves. However, in the case of women, they are likely to depend on their spouse, son or daughter. In a report by Women World Banking (2019), only 77% of women have a bank account; among them, only 50% minimally handle their bank account or do not attend at all. But why so? For a long time, women were considered only homemakers and financially dependent on men. The exposure to the outer world was less than men. Ultimately, they have lacked the interest to interact with outer society. Moreover, they do not want to take responsibility for financial issues.

In the case of handling various gadgets, a dichotomy is observed too. The study reveals that male participants are more efficient in handling devices than female participants. About 32% of male respondents agreed that they handle their devices all by themselves, but on the contrary, only 2.7% of female participants use mobile phones and other gadgets without anyone's help. On the other hand, around 87% of female respondents depend on others to use the devices.

The reasons behind this dichotomy can be explained through the looking glass of the socioeconomic profile of society. At the early stage of the commercialisation of gadgets, these communicable devices (Mobile and Laptop, in this case) were considered luxury goods. Finding these gadgets in excess numbers in a middle-class family was quite unlikely. This inadequacy led to the use of gadgets by a limited user. Most of the time, the male member used the devices more frequently than female members. The reason can be explained this way; earlier, the male member was more exposed to the outer world and needed to cope with new gadgets. On the other hand, non-working women did not feel the need to own a mobile phone as it was expensive and did not have the urgency. In this case, working women and those who like to follow the trend are more interested in using mobile phones and other gadgets.

***Relationship between behavioural well-being and elder generation:*** In this fast world, an individual's mental well-being is as important as physical and social well-being. Psychological well-being includes evaluative well-being or life satisfaction, hedonic well-being or feeling of happiness, sadness etc., and eudemonic well-being, i.e. a sense of purpose and meaning of life (Steptoe, Deaton and Stone, 2015). According to American Psychological Association, anxiety and depression among elderly adults inauspiciously affect physical health and ability to function. In this section of our study, the different sides of elderly behaviour are studied to understand their relationship.

Here, some variables are to be studied (table: 6) from a gender perspective. First comes whether the elders get enough respect from family and if they feel unwanted at home. In this case, the gender dichotomy has been explored. Regarding respecting elders, 16 % of males and nearly 13 % of females strongly opposed the statement and revealed that they do not deserve respect from their families. In comparison, around 20 % of females seem undecided, against 8% of males.

Interestingly, around one person in every ten strongly agreed that they get enough respect from family, but only 6.7% of female respondents strongly agreed. In the case of the elder's feeling about being unwanted at home, there is a gender dichotomy too. Having a significant level of 95%, the detailed study discloses that 36% of male respondents are undecided about this feeling. On the other hand, about 25% of female respondents agree that sometimes they feel unwanted at home, against 20% of male respondents. The gender difference has also been highlighted in our following variable, where they have been asked if the daily activities seem trivial or tiresome for them.

**Table 6: Behavioural well-being and elder generation**

Influenced variable	Influencing variable	Chi-square value	Significance level
Respected by family	Gender	14.984	P< 0.05
Feeling unwanted at Home	Gender	15.606	P <0.05
Willing to go to Old Age home	Feeling unwanted at home	56.939	P< 0.05
Working Status	Feeling the Burden of family	8.068	P >0.05
Daily activities seem trivial	Gender	10.733	P <0.05
<b>Source: Computed by the Authors, 2021</b>			

The male respondents are always keeping negative responses towards this. However, the women participants do agree with the statement. Around 24% of elderly women feel tired of doing their daily activities, against no percentage when their men counterparts are concerned. At the end of the study, it can be concluded that the female respondents are much more vulnerable to underlying loneliness and dissatisfaction. A test has been run between desires to go to an old age home with unwanted feelings at home. Approximately 28% of respondents have shown a lack of interest regarding this statement. They are undecided about going to the old age home. Around 10% have agreed they feel unwanted at home, so they prefer to go to an old age home. Lastly, the behaviour of elders has been studied from socioeconomic status. Having  $p > 0.05$ , the study unveils that if an elder is economically productive, the feeling of being burdened by family is not influenced by the former. The World Health Organization (WHO) have presented that between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's older adults may double from 12% to 22%, and it is urgent to discuss the physical and psychological needs of the elders. As per the report of WHO (2017), the most common mental and physical disorders in this age group are dementia and depression. Around 3.8% of the world's elderly population is affected by anxiety disorders. Another matter of concern for elders is social isolation. In that case, Kotian et al. (2018) concluded that women are more vulnerable to being socially isolated. These factors are gender insensitivity, lack of financial independence, gender stereotypes, etc. The family system also plays a vital role, as older adults might get benefitted from a joint and extended family system for support. The disintegration of this kind of family system may increase the chance of befall social isolation (Kotian et al., 2018). Our study also echoes the almost identical situation for elders. There is a sharp distinction between women and men in the context of different well-being issues. Women elders are more susceptible to the attack of different well-being issues than men.

### **Elders and Covid-19 Pandemic**

For a year, the people of Bengal and the world have included terms in their vocabulary like Masks, Sanitizer, Lockdown, Quarantine, Containment Zone, etc. However, the first dawn of the 20th year of the 21st Century was not the beginning of new hope but the bearer of upcoming grave news to the world. On January 27, 2020, the first confirmed Covid -19 infection was reported in Kerala, India (Andrews et al., 2020). Then, on March 17 2020, West Bengal got its first Covid-19 case. Coexisting with Covid-19, another concept has got the limelight, i.e. lockdown. This section will study the elderly population and their pandemic lockdown experience. Lockdown is declared the 'word of the year' by Collins Dictionary.

According to Merriam-Webster, the lockdown is 'an emergency measure or condition in which people are temporarily prevented from entering or leaving a restricted area or building (such as a school) during a threat of danger'. Alternatively, in other terms, a temporary condition imposed by governmental authorities (as during the outbreak of an epidemic disease) in which people are required to stay in their homes and refrain from or limit activities outside the home involving public contact (such as dining out or attending large gatherings). The lockdown has got a new dimension during covid-19. The people got confined to their houses entirely. Well, the lockdown is not new for elders. Only this situation was indifferent form and pattern. Why so? The elders of our society generally prefer to stay in their houses.

The crowded traffic system, financial independence, and living on others' support are the subtle factors identified for the lockdown before the covid period. Shankar and Hamer et al. (2016) have already attempted to draw attention to elders' social isolation and loneliness. The authors have tried to analyse the isolation and loneliness of individuals with two measures of functional status (gait Speed and difficulties in activities of daily living) in older adults. The loneliness and other issues of elders got a new dimension during the covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. De Pue (2021) has attempted to identify the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on older adults' well-being and cognitive functions. The authors have concluded that the Covid-19 period significantly impacted older adults. They observed a significant decrease in well-being, activity level, and sleep quality during the Covid-19 period compared to before the pandemic.

On the other hand, the loneliness issue also got attention. Berg-Weger and Morley (2020) have discussed the loneliness and social isolation in older adults during the covid-19 pandemic. According to the authors, the data on the impact of loneliness and social isolation indicates significant and long-term adverse outcomes for older adults. The issues got influenced by several factors, therefore, implying a change in the behavioural patterns of elderly adults.

This section will explore elders' experiences during the pandemic lockdown. Living within a closed door, different emotional issues may arise. Quarrelling is one of them. It may cause anger, frustration, depression, or any other emotional cause, but does quarrelling among elders have a new scale during the lockdown? Observation says that quarrelling got influenced by family type during the lockdown, and it hits men and women differently. It can be said from the detailed observation that people residing from joint families (84%) have lived with their families peacefully during the lockdown. On the other hand, around 40% of nuclear family members have admitted to quarrelling with family members during the lockdown. From a gender viewpoint, the disagreement rate regarding this is lower in men (56%) than in women (65.6%).

The gloomy picture of the pandemic lockdown experience of elders has been uncovered in our next section (Table 7). The respondents were asked if they found it challenging to spend their free time and felt lonely despite living with their family or else. It is not shocking that 72.2% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Why is it entirely predictable? The generation gap can explain the answer. There are plenty of leisure options for the younger generation to spend quality time. Even during the lockdown, the urban young was more fascinated by electronic gadgets to kill their spare time. Scrolling down social media has always been a good way to escape from the real world. But what about the elders of our society? The elders are more prone to get affected by diseases, especially by Covid-19. Therefore, they cannot go out more often during the lockdown. Besides, from our study, it has been revealed that the surveyed elders are not expert users of digital gadgets. Also, the elderly may not be interested in the virtual world (Gupta, 2020). So, entering the virtual world cannot be an option for them to spend their free time. Many elders have lost interest in nurturing their forgotten hobbies. Television and other conventional media are the only hope for them. They feel 24 hours is unnecessarily long for them. About 73% of women have admitted that spending their free time during the lockdown has been difficult.

In contrast, only 28% of men think free time is burdensome. The picture is getting clearer. From our study, we learn that there is a difference in gender regarding gadget use. Besides, they cannot go out either. The observation says that women feel more strenuous to fill their free time than men during a pandemic. It is indeed that the daily routine of elders has changed after entering the lockdown period. The observation declares that half of the women have accepted that the pandemic lockdown has changed their daily routine. However, almost 49% of elderly women contradict the opinion. From the survey, it can be said that for homemakers, the extra time of the day is not much different from the pre-Covid-19 period.

On the other hand, 68% of male elderly respondents have admitted that their daily routine has been altered. Most of our male respondents are connected with economic activity. According to them, the daily routine is affected by the pandemic lockdown.

**Table 7: Behavioural patterns of elders and Covid 19 pandemic**

Influenced Variable	Influencing variable	Chi-Square value	Significance level
<b>Quarrel With Family During Lockdown</b>	Family Type	15.540	P<0.05
<b>Quarrel With Family During Lockdown</b>	Gender	14.492	P< 0.05
<b>Difficulty At Spending Free Time</b>	Gender	39.227	P< 0.05
<b>Free Time Difficulty</b>	Lonely Despite Living With Family	48.852	P <0.05
<b>Routine Change After Pandemic</b>	Gender	19.529	P <0.05

Source: Computed by the Authors, 2021

**Elder Generation and Loneliness:** In this section, an attempt has been made to explain the objective, whether Covid-19 has augmented the loneliness of the elderly population consequent upon the lockdown. In order to answer this question, the UCLA Scale of Loneliness (Version 3) has been used to measure loneliness. Daniel W. Russell (1996) was the one who developed this scale. According to Russell himself, this scale has high reliability both in terms of internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Here, two paired sample t-tests have been done among the internal statements between two periods, i.e. before Covid-19 Pandemic (Normal) and After Covid-19 Pandemic (New Normal).

**Table 8: Tabulated form showing paired sample t-Test between UCLA variables (N=42)**

		t-test Value	Significant Level
Pair 1	in_Tune - in_tune_cov		
Pair 2	feel_alone - feel_alone_cov	-2.864	P<0.05
Pair 3	Common_people - common_people_cov	2.218	P<0.05
Pair 4	Outgoing - outgoing_cov	1.499	P>0.05
Pair 5	left_out - left_out_cov	2.726	P<0.05.
Pair 6	People_talkable - people_talkable_cov	-3.048	P<0.05

Source: Computed by Authors, 2021

The calculated table (Table8) includes some interesting facts. Coming to the first pair, whether the respondents are in tune with others. Surprisingly there is a significant change which implies that the older generation has lost the tuning during this prolonged lockdown period. The second pair is about to determine whether there is any significant change in feeling lonely between the covid-19 pandemic lockdown and before that or not. Unfortunately, the answer is yes. The elderly people do feel lonely during this lockdown. And isn't it obvious? The elderly people have been confined in their houses for so long. No friends, no neighbours, the loneliness emerged naturally.

Moving on to the next pair, the test has been done about people sharing a common thought process or not. During the lockdown, people are stuck in a one-room and have nothing much to do. Due to the psychological rush, it is expected that people may or may not get along with each other. This phenomenon has been reflected in this pair. The elderly respondents think that the people around them are no longer on the same wavelength of thought process. The following pair deals with human nature and whether s/he is outgoing. Analysing the test results shows no significant change in this case. Because this is an in-built trait of humans, those people who are outgoing, there is very little chance to change this trait. The last two pairs indicate the cause-effect relationship with each other. If there are not many people to talk to, feeling left out is quite apparent. No wonder these two variables will bear a significant value. Another paired sample t-test has been done (table:9) that will show if there is any significant relation between loneliness between the span of before covid and after a covid period. Furthermore, not so shocking, but unfortunately, the analysis revealed that the older generation gets attacked by loneliness.

**Table 9: Showing paired sample t-Test of UCLA Score**

	t-test value	Significance level
Before_covid – After_covid	-3.444	.001

Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic enormously impacted older adults aged 65 years or above. The risk of social isolation and loneliness due to governmental regulations raises concerns about the mental health and cognitive functioning of this population among the mass, especially among the elderly people.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

After analysing the various issues of elders, it can be said that the respondents do not face any significant financial crunch, and they are living in apartments or semi-complexes or their ancestral houses of upper-middle-class families. From the analysis of living arrangements, the elders are found to be pretty much family-oriented. One thing that has attracted attention is the gender disparity among all the issues. Elderly women are more prone to get affected by social isolation and loneliness than men. The study result of behavioural issues regarding gender, like family respect, feelings of being unwanted at home, difficulty spending free time during the lockdown, routine change after the pandemic, etc., will support the findings.

Apart from the gender disparity, the psychological issues during the covid-19 pandemic are another matter of concern for the elderly population of our society. The issues like whether they are in tune with others or not find everyday things around people, their outgoing nature, feelings of loneliness and being left out have been studied respect before the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic to find out the changes. After analysing, a significant change has been detected. The analysis helps conclude that the elders are affected by loneliness after the covid-19 pandemic. The final blow of the proof of loneliness has been revealed by analysing the UCLA Score. The significant level of the score unveils that the aged people are stroked by loneliness severely during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

In conclusion, it can be said that the elders' loneliness is becoming a major issue in present society. Being stigmatised as economically unproductive and dependent on others, the elders can be affected by depression and feeling left out. However, it should keep it in mind that older generations are not a burden at all. On the contrary, society and a person may get enriched by the experience of our elders. The process of ageing cannot be stopped; it is inevitable. However, what we can do is utilise this growing population age group wisely. They have served the society for so long; society can pay back by being more empathetic towards them.

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