

# Comparative Assessment of Frustration Discomfort Tolerance of Elderly and Young People

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To assess the frustration discomfort tolerance of elderly people and young people

**Methodology:** The study was carried out among 100 young people aged less than 40 years and 100 elderly people aged more than 60 years in Kerala State, India using a questionnaire containing the measure of frustration discomfort tolerance and the strength with which they hold the beliefs included in it. The data was analysed as proportion, score and through statistical test.

**Results:** Young people have comparatively more tolerance for frustration discomfort beliefs than elderly people, with youngsters having a lower and statistically significant mean frustration discomfort belief score than elderly people. Beliefs related to the demanding nature of jobs of youngsters such as - cannot stand being prevented from achieving one's full potential, cannot bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal, cannot tolerate lowering one's standards even when it would be useful to do so etc. are held more strongly by young people than elders. However, beliefs such as - requiring the easiest way around a problem, must be absolutely free of disturbing feelings quickly, cannot stand others acting against one's wishes etc., which cannot be expected much from youngsters, considering their competitive and demanding nature of jobs are held strongly by less number of them than elders, who may be mostly leading a restful life.

**Conclusion:** The demanding nature of jobs of young people, who get accustomed to handling unfavourable situations more than elderly people, who mostly lead a restful life possibly explain the outcomes of the study. Such studies will be useful for devising measures to overcome frustration and reduce mental disorders and treatment.

**Keywords:** Frustration Discomfort, Tolerance, Elderly People, Young People

### Introduction

Frustration tolerance is the capacity of an individual to withstand frustration without failure of psychological adjustment; i.e., without resorting to inadequate modes of behaviours [1]. Most of the people have to face frustration in old age because they have lesser frustration tolerance to cope up with situations [2].

Negative attitudes about ageing have significant consequences for the physical and mental health of older adults. Recently published research shows that older people who hold negative views in life do not recover as well from disability, and live on

average 7.5 years less than people with positive attitudes. By 2025, the number of people aged 60 and over will double and by 2050 will reach 2 billion globally, with the vast majority of older people living in low- and middle-income countries. Even though there has been widespread belief that older adults experience fewer life stress, studies have shown that older persons constitute a different population and deserve specific studies, although the needs and problems of this sector of the population has long been ignored. This may be due to the stereotypic effects of ageism and the misattribution of problems or pathology to ageing. This has a clinical bearing when symptoms presented by elder patients to doctors are explained away simply as the effect of ageing without paying due attention to the underlying organic aetiology. Such misdiagnosis can often have devastating outcome. It is therefore

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useful to explore the probable unique psychology of this group of people and to investigate whether cross cultural and cross racial differences are present [3].

Hence, analysis of the behaviour of elderly people appears to be relevant so that informed decisions can be taken to improve their wellbeing. The study reported in this article was carried out in this context in order to analyse the frustration discomfort tolerance of elderly people in comparison with young people. It was hypothesised that elderly people will have less frustration discomfort tolerance than young people.

**Methodology**

The study was carried out among a randomly selected sample of 100 young people (30 to 40 years age) and 100 elderly people (aged more than 60 years) residing in Kerala State of India using a questionnaire, which contained the measure of frustration discomfort tolerance having various beliefs related to frustration discomfort [4]. The respondents were asked to rate the strength with which they hold the beliefs as follows: No such belief, Mild belief, Strong belief, Very strong belief, which were scored on a 4-point continuum. A higher score indicates less frustration distress tolerance for a belief and vice versa. The data was analysed as proportion, score and through statistical test.

**Results**

Table 1 shows the statistical significance of the difference in mean frustration discomfort belief score between elderly and young people.

**Table 1: Statistical significance of the difference in mean frustration discomfort belief score between elderly and young people**

| Mean frustration discomfort belief score* |              |
|---|--------------|
| Elderly people                            | Young people |
| 2.2                                       | 1.8          |
| t stat = 2.10; Significant p < 0.05       |              |

\*Mean score of all the beliefs

Table 2 shows the mean score for various beliefs related to frustration discomfort and the statistical significance of the difference in the scores between elderly and young people.

**Table 2: Statistical significance of the difference in the mean score for each belief related to frustration discomfort between elderly and young people**

| Belief  | Mean score* for the belief |              | t value and statistical significance |
|---|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | Elderly people             | Young people |                                      |
| Needs the easiest way around a problem  | 2.4                        | 1.5          | - 3.25; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't stand having to wait for things one would like now  | 2.6                        | 1.8          | - 2.68; p < 0.01                     |
| Must be absolutely free of disturbing feelings as quickly as possible and can't bear if they continue | 2.6                        | 1.5          | - 3.16; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't stand it if people act against one's wishes   | 2.5                        | 1.5          | 2.86; p < 0.01                       |
| Can't bear to feel that one is losing his/her mind  | 2.7                        | 1.6          | - 3.22; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal  | 1.4                        | 2.6          | - 3.83; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't bear it if other people stand in the way of what one wants                                      | 2.7                        | 1.6          | - 3.57; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't bear to have certain thoughts   | 2.7                        | 1.5          | - 4.43; p < 0.001                    |
| Can't tolerate lowering one's standards even when it would be useful to do so                         | 2.1                        | 2.9          | - 3.15; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't tolerate being taken for granted  | 1.5                        | 2.7          | - 4.43; p < 0.001                    |
| Can't stand situations where one might feel upset   | 2.4                        | 1.4          | - 3.63; p < 0.01                     |
| Can't bear to move on from work one is not fully satisfied with                                       | 2.9                        | 1.6          | - 4.04; p < 0.001                    |

\*A higher score indicates less frustration distress tolerance

Table 3 gives details of the strength with which elderly and young people hold the beliefs related to frustration discomfort.

**Table 3: The strength with which elderly and young people hold the beliefs related to frustration discomfort**

| Belief  | Respondents (%) reporting the strength with which they hold the belief |             |               |                    |                |             |               |                    |
|---|--|-------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|
|   | Elderly people   |             |               |                    | Young people   |             |               |                    |
|   | No such belief   | Mild belief | Strong belief | Very strong belief | No such belief | Mild belief | Strong belief | Very strong belief |
| Needs the easiest way around a problem  | 10   | 40          | 50            | -                  | 40             | 60          | -             | -                  |
| Can't stand having to wait for things one would like now  | 10   | 30          | 50            | 10                 | 20             | 80          | -             | -                  |
| Must be absolutely free of disturbing feelings as quickly as possible and can't bear if they continue | 20   | 10          | 70            | -                  | 50             | 50          | -             | -                  |

|   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Can't stand being prevented from achieving one's full potential               | 40 | 50 | 10 | -  | 20 | 50 | 20 | 10 |
| Can't stand doing tasks that seem too difficult                               | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 60 | 30 | 10 | -  |
| Can't stand it if people act against one's wishes                             | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 60 | 30 | 10 | -  |
| Can't bear to feel that one is losing his/her mind                            | 10 | 40 | 40 | 10 | 60 | 30 | 10 | -  |
| Can't bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal                        | 60 | 40 | -  | -  | -  | 60 | 20 | 20 |
| Can't stand doing tasks when one is not in the mood                           | 30 | 40 | 30 | -  | 40 | 60 | -  | -  |
| Can't bear it if other people stand in the way of what one wants              | 10 | 20 | 60 | 10 | 40 | 60 | -  | -  |
| Can't bear to have certain thoughts   | -  | 40 | 50 | 10 | 50 | 50 | -  | -  |
| Can't tolerate lowering one's standards even when it would be useful to do so | 10 | 70 | 20 | -  | -  | 20 | 70 | 10 |
| Can't stand having to push oneself at tasks                                   | 20 | 40 | 40 | -  | 40 | 50 | 10 | -  |
| Can't tolerate being taken for granted  | 50 | 50 | -  | -  | -  | 40 | 50 | 10 |
| Can't stand situations where one might feel upset                             | 10 | 30 | 60 | -  | 60 | 40 | -  | -  |
| Can't bear to move on from work one is not fully satisfied with               | 10 | -  | 80 | 10 | 50 | 40 | 10 | -  |

## Discussion

The words, namely, youngsters indicating young people, and elders indicating elderly people have also been used in the discussion.

A higher score indicates less frustration discomfort tolerance for a belief. It can be made out from Table 1 that statistically significant difference is there in the mean frustration discomfort belief score between elderly and young people. The mean score is slightly more for elders (2.2) than youngsters (1.8), indicating that elderly people have comparatively less tolerance for frustration discomfort beliefs than young people.

The interpretation of the results related to the beliefs is shown below:

**Requires the easiest way around a problem:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.4) for elderly people than young people (1.5), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). While 40 % of young people do not have such a belief and 60 % have a mild belief only, the corresponding proportion in the case of elderly people are 10 % and 40% respectively. While none of the young people report a strong belief in this, 50 % of elders strongly believe in this (Table 3). This indicates less frustration discomfort tolerance by elders with respect to this belief. Youngsters nowadays are mostly exposed to strenuous work and finding out various solutions to problems. This might have probably trained their minds better to look for alternate ways instead of an easy one only to solve problems in life than elderly people. Ideally it is always better to find the easiest way to solve a problem since that would be efficient from the perspective of time involved. From their experience of handling various problems during their life span, elderly people can be expected to be able to find out the easiest solution for a problem. This could be the probable reason why they have a belief about taking the easiest way around a problem.

**Can't stand having to wait for things one would like now:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.6) for elderly people than young people (1.8), with statistically significant difference

in the scores (Table 2). In the case of elderly people, 50 % reported a strong belief on this, while none of the young people have reported in this manner. The proportion of young people who do not have such a belief is double that of elders who report that they do not have such a belief (Table 3). Hence, youngsters are able to tolerate this frustration discomfort belief more than elderly people. The day-to-day compelling experiences of youngsters at work might have probably conditioned their minds to have more patience in order to lead a less stressful life.

**Must be absolutely free of disturbing feelings as quickly as possible and can't bear if they continue:** Statistically significant difference is observed in the score for this belief between elders and young people, with the former category getting a comparatively higher score than the latter category (Table 2), implying that elders have comparatively more problem in tolerating this frustration discomfort belief than youngsters. This is further substantiated by the data shown in Table 2, which shows that only 20 % of elderly people report having no such belief, as compared to 50 % of youngsters reporting in this manner. Further, while none of the young people report a strong belief, 70 % of elderly people strongly believe in this (Table 3). As mentioned with respect to the just previous belief, the nature of work of young people would have probably necessitated them to become more tolerant of disturbing feelings also. Under the present work culture, the job does not usually end at the office, but is carried to the home as well. The youngsters are fully aware of this, and hence, their belief about things which might disturb them such as the one being discussed here could be low. Only thing is that the work - life balance will be mostly at stake, which the youngsters might accept as a part of the system.

**Can't stand it if people act against one's wishes:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.5) for elderly people than young people (1.5), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). Compared to 40 % of elders having such a belief, 60 % of youngsters do not hold such a belief. While 20 % of elderly people strongly believe and 10 % strongly believe in this, only 10 % of young people have such a strong belief (Table 3). These

results indicate that elders are able to tolerate this belief less than youngsters, making them more prone to frustration discomfort on account of such a belief. As far as young people are concerned, the probable commanding nature of their boss might have conditioned them to continue their life even when people don't toe their line. This will also depend on the leadership trait of a person. Elderly people who have aggressive leadership qualities might probably have more of this belief.

**Can't bear to feel that one is losing his/her mind:** While 40 % of elderly people strongly believe and 10 % very strongly believe in this, only 10 % of young people report a strong belief (Table 3). The mean score for this belief is higher (2.7) for elderly people than young people (1.6), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). These findings imply that elderly people cannot bear the feeling that they are losing their mind (becoming mentally upset) as much as young people. Age related medical problems and a feeling of insecurity might have probably made them unable to tolerate being mentally upset. This may be one of the reasons why elderly people are not in a position to tolerate disturbing feelings much, as observed in this study.

**Can't bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.6) for young people than elderly people (1.4), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). While 20 % of youngsters strongly believe in this, another 20 % believe in this very strongly. However, none of the elderly people have such a strong or very strong belief (Table 3). These results indicate that young people are not able to bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal as much as elders. This may probably be because in the competitive world existing now, in which, young people get more oriented towards achieving their goals as a necessity, especially in their work. Hence, they may feel frustrated if they are not able to achieve them. This feeling might transcend to their daily life also. However, this need not be the case with elders, who may be mostly leading a restful life, with not much of obligations or goals to be achieved.

**Can't bear it if other people stand in the way of what one wants:** 60 % of elders have a strong belief and 10 % believe in this very strongly, while none of the young people strongly or very strongly believe in this. Only 10 % of elderly people report that they don't have such a belief, as compared to 40 % of youngsters reporting no such belief (Table 3). The mean score for this belief is higher (2.7) for elderly people than young people (1.6), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). These results imply that elderly people are not in a position to tolerate frustration due to this belief as much as young people. Youngsters might probably be overcoming the obstacles faced from peers and superiors in work, which could even be frequent in some cases, necessitating behavioural adjustments to such problems.

**Can't bear to have certain thoughts:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.7) for elderly people than young people (1.5), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). While 50 % of young people do not have this belief, none of the elders have such a response. 60 % of elders have given the responses, namely, strong and very strong belief when considered together, while none of the young people have responded in this

manner (Table 3). This implies that youngsters are in a better position to tolerate unpleasant or negative thoughts than elders. This may probably due to the influence of age on the mental state of elderly people, which may not allow them to tolerate negative thoughts much.

**Can't tolerate lowering one's standards even when it would be useful to do so:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.9) for young people than elders (2.1), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). A total of 80 % of young people have a strong and very strong belief together on this, while only 20 % of elderly people strongly believe in this (Table 3). This indicates that young people under this study have more mindset than elderly people about maintaining good standards in life. Nowadays, with their nature of work being competitive and demanding, in order to improve their career, youngsters may probably be better oriented towards maintaining their standards.

People with high standards believe that everything matters and that nothing is small stuff. They hold themselves to high standards because they know that without doing this, they will not get to where they want to go or become the people they want to be. They get stressed about not meeting the standards (their goals) and use this stress to drive them forward to get better and better. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-high-standards-your-life-career-what-mean-harrison-barnes-1c/>). On the other hand, elderly people may not be mostly oriented towards maintaining high standards in life considering their age, leading a retired life with availability of pension in some cases, having already achieved good standards in life when they were young, less commitments towards their family during old age etc.

**Can't tolerate being taken for granted:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.7) for young people than elderly people (1.5), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). A total of 60 % of young people report having strong and very strong belief on this. However, none of the elderly people report in this manner. Further, while 50 % of elders do not have such a belief, none of the youngsters have mentioned that they don't have the belief (Table 3). These results show that the tolerance of frustration on account of being taken for granted in life is less in the case of young people than elders.

According to Samantha Ettus, a work / life expert and author of 'The Pie Life: A Guilt-Free Recipe for Success and Satisfaction', taking someone for granted is when you expect a person to be there, but lack appreciation for their role. If you feel taken for granted, it is probably because you are giving more than you are getting. Relationships always involve a give and take, but in this case, the taker is taking way too much, expecting the giver to be there. They rely on the giver to do most of the work in the relationship (<https://www.rd.com/list/signs-youre-being-taken-for-granted/>). Nowadays, when youngsters are compelled by their bosses to be more productive and goal oriented in their job, they would try their level best to achieve the targets. Under such a situation, they might probably expect their boss to also appreciate their contributions well. This could be the reason why, in the present study, more youngsters do not tolerate being taken for granted than elderly people. Due to this habit, such a mindset could also probably apply to their daily life also. As far as elders are concerned, after their long career and retirement,

which would have made them more seasoned/mature in life, they might not probably bother much when they are taken for granted by family members or others.

**Can't stand situations where one might feel upset:** While 60 % of young people report that they do not have such a belief, only 10 % of elderly people do not have this belief. 60 % of elderly people strongly believe in this, while none of the youngsters have such a strong belief (Table 3). Statistically significant difference is observed between the mean score of elderly and young people (Table 2), with the former category having a higher score of 2.4 than young people (score of 1.4). This indicates that elders are not able to tolerate situations where they might feel upset as much as young people. As already mentioned about why elderly people are not able to bear certain thoughts as much as young people, old age related medical problems and uncertainties might have probably contributed to less tolerance of the belief related to their inability to withstand upsetting feelings also. On the other hand, the level of demands and uncertainties faced by young people in their competitive nature of work might have necessitated to adjust themselves to situations, in which they might feel upset to move forward in life.

**Can't bear to move on from work one is not fully satisfied with:** The mean score for this belief is higher (2.9) for elderly people than young people (1.6), with statistically significant difference in the scores (Table 2). Table 3 shows that only 10 % of elderly people do not have such a belief, while 50% of young people do not have the belief. Further, 80 % of elderly people strongly believe and 10 % very strongly believe in this. However, only 10 % of youngsters report a strong belief on this (Table 3). These findings indicate the comparatively more resilience ability of young people to move on in work which may not be fully satisfactory to them. The competitive and demanding nature of jobs for young people would have probably made them adapted to such type of work. However, the relaxed and easy mindset of elderly people may be probably making them hesitant to carry out activities, which they feel are not fully satisfactory.

Even though there was no statistically significant difference in the mean score of the beliefs shown below between young and elderly people, the strength with which the respondents hold these beliefs is as follows:

**Can't stand being prevented from achieving one's full potential:** 30 % of young people have given the two responses, namely, strong and very strong belief together. However, only 10 % of elders strongly believe in this (Table 3). This again shows the comparatively more enterprising nature of youngsters, which may be an outcome of the nature of jobs they are involved in.

**Can't stand doing tasks that seem too difficult:** While 60 % of young people report that they do not have such a belief, only 40 % of elderly people report so. While 30 % of elders report strong and very strong belief on this, only 10 % of youngsters report it as a strong belief (Table 3). These results also indicate the capability of youngsters to put in their best efforts to do even difficult tasks. Since elderly people will be mostly retired or not doing any work now, they may not be necessarily having the mentality to carry out difficult activities. Their health might also be a factor contributing to this.

**Can't stand doing tasks when one is not in the mood:** 30 % of elderly people have a strong belief about this. However, none of the young people have a strong belief on this (Table 3). The demanding nature of their jobs might have probably necessitated young people to become more used to undertaking tasks even when having unpleasant mood.

**Can't stand having to push oneself at tasks:** While 40 % of elderly people strongly believe in this, only 10 % of young people report a strong belief on this. Further, while only 20 % of elderly people report having no such belief, 40 % of young people report that they don't have such a belief (Table 3). Once again this indicates the willingness of young people to strive much in life, which could probably be an outcome of the demanding nature of their jobs, as already mentioned in the discussion with respect to some of the beliefs.

### Conclusion

With respect to the frustration discomfort beliefs, namely, can't stand being prevented from achieving one's full potential, can't bear the frustration of not achieving one's goal, can't tolerate lowering one's standards even when it would be useful to do so, and can't tolerate being taken for granted, higher proportion of young people hold these beliefs strongly than elderly people. However, with respect to the beliefs, namely, needs the easiest way around a problem, can't stand having to wait for things one would like now, must be absolutely free of disturbing feelings as quickly as possible, can't stand doing tasks that seem too difficult, can't stand it if people act against one's wishes, can't bear to feel that one is losing his/her mind, can't stand doing tasks when one is not in the mood, can't bear it if other people stand in the way of what one wants, can't bear to have certain thoughts, can't stand having to push oneself at tasks, can't stand situations where one might feel upset, and can't bear to move on from work one is not fully satisfied with, either none or less proportion of young people hold these beliefs strongly, when compared to elderly people. This trend may be attributed to the demanding nature of the jobs of most of the young people, who get accustomed to handling unfavourable situations and outcomes depicted in these beliefs to a greater extent than elderly people, who would be mostly retired and leading a restful life. These findings also substantiate the result of the study that young people have comparatively more tolerance for frustration discomfort beliefs than elderly people, with the former category having a lower and statistically significant mean frustration discomfort belief score than elderly people. Hence, the results substantiate the hypothesis of the study that elderly people will have less frustration discomfort tolerance than youngsters.

These type of studies among people of different ages could be helpful to understand the factors which cause frustration. This can help in devising suitable measures including relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, exercise etc. to overcome frustration and reduce psychosomatic disorders such as anxiety, depression etc. resulting from the experience of frustration by people. This could be also useful to avoid psychiatric treatment for such problems and improve the wellbeing of people.

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