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B.A. Sociology Honours | Semester 6 | SOC6EJ303(2)

Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management

Course Code: SOC6EJ303(2) • Module 1 Notes

Module 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING

Course: SOC6EJ303(2) – Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management • **University of Calicut (CUFYUGP 2024)**

1. Conceptual Scope, Epistemic Frameworks & Curricular Foundations

The academic investigation of **Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management**, specifically regarding Module 1 (INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING), is anchored within the rigorous undergraduate curriculum of Calicut University under the CUFYUGP 2024 regulations. This module is structured around core thematic units designed to provide learners with both theoretical mastery and critical empirical awareness.

In contemporary sociological scholarship, society is understood not as a static aggregate of detached individuals, but as an emergent, dynamically organized matrix of structured relations, institutionalized practices, and cultural meanings. C. Wright Mills famously articulated that the primary purpose of the sociological imagination is to comprehend the intricate connections between individual biographies and macroscopic historical structures. Throughout this module, learners examine how institutional arrangements reproduce order, manage social contradictions, and condition individual agency.

2. Systematic Sociological Examination of Gerontology- Definition, concept, History, importance, and scope

The scholarly examination of **Gerontology- Definition, concept, History, importance, and scope** constitutes an indispensable analytical domain within *Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management*. In sociological epistemology, social phenomena are neither arbitrary behavioral aggregates nor biologically predetermined necessities; rather, they represent emergent structural configurations shaped by historical trajectories, institutional mechanisms, power relations, and normative consensus.

When interrogating gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope, sociologists examine the dynamic interplay between microscopic individual agency and macroscopic structural constraints. Every social institution or practice operates through established networks of socialization, sanctions, and structural incentives that reproduce stability while generating internal contradictions that drive progressive social transformation.

2.1. Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemological Frameworks

Contemporary sociological literature concerning gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope is characterized by profound theoretical plurality. The structural-functionalist tradition—derived from Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton—interrogates this domain through functional prerequisites, institutional integration, and equilibrium maintenance, distinguishing between manifest objectives and latent structural consequences.

Conversely, critical conflict paradigms and Marxist traditions—elaborated by Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and contemporary critical theorists—unmask how institutional arrangements surrounding gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope reflect underlying relations of production, class exploitation, and ideological hegemony. Furthermore, feminist and subaltern perspectives illuminate how patriarchal structures, graded caste inequalities, and colonial legacies intersect to marginalise subordinate social groups within these institutional networks.

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2.2. Institutional Mechanics and Empirical Realities

From an empirical perspective, the operational mechanics of gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope must be examined within concrete socio-historical contexts. In developing societies and particularly in the complex social matrix of contemporary India, modern statutory laws, market forces, and constitutional values coexist alongside enduring traditional hierarchies of caste, kinship endogamy, and community networks.

Empirical field studies emphasize that social transformation is neither linear nor uniform. While urbanization, digital technology, democratic decentralization, and state welfare policies create new avenues for upward social mobility and civic participation, traditional elites often adapt, maintaining institutional control through informal patronage networks and economic monopolies. Understanding gerontology-definition, concept, history, importance, and scope therefore requires rigorous empirical methodologies that combine quantitative demographic surveys with in-depth qualitative field ethnography.

2.3. Contemporary Policy Debates and Regional Applications

Within the context of Keralam and the wider Indian subcontinent, the practical implications of gerontology-definition, concept, history, importance, and scope are directly manifested in contemporary policy interventions and grassroots mobilizations. Historical social reforms—notably the Kerala Renaissance (*Navodhanam*) movements, tenancy land reforms, and the devolution of planning authority to Panchayati Raj institutions—demonstrate how organized collective action can dismantle entrenched institutional privileges.

However, modern society faces complex second-generation challenges, including demographic aging, youth employment precarity, environmental vulnerabilities, and the integration of diverse social communities. Addressing these challenges requires nuanced sociological literacy, evidence-based policy design, and an unwavering commitment to social justice, constitutional equity, and inclusive human development.

3. Systematic Sociological Examination of Demographics of Aging, Characteristics of old age. Myths and stereotypes about aging

The scholarly examination of **Demographics of Aging, Characteristics of old age. Myths and stereotypes about aging** constitutes an indispensable analytical domain within *Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management*. In sociological epistemology, social phenomena are neither arbitrary behavioral aggregates nor biologically predetermined necessities; rather, they represent emergent structural configurations shaped by historical trajectories, institutional mechanisms, power relations, and normative consensus.

When interrogating demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging, sociologists examine the dynamic interplay between microscopic individual agency and macroscopic structural constraints. Every social institution or practice operates through established networks of socialization, sanctions, and structural incentives that reproduce stability while generating internal contradictions that drive progressive social transformation.

3.1. Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemological Frameworks

Contemporary sociological literature concerning demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging is characterized by profound theoretical plurality. The structural-functionalist tradition—derived from Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton—interrogates this domain through functional prerequisites, institutional integration, and equilibrium maintenance, distinguishing between manifest objectives and latent structural consequences.

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From an empirical perspective, the operational mechanics of demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging must be examined within concrete socio-historical contexts. In developing societies and particularly in the complex social matrix of contemporary India, modern statutory laws, market forces, and constitutional values coexist alongside enduring traditional hierarchies of caste, kinship endogamy, and community networks.

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3.3. Contemporary Policy Debates and Regional Applications

Within the context of Keralam and the wider Indian subcontinent, the practical implications of demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging are directly manifested in contemporary policy interventions and grassroots mobilizations. Historical social reforms—notably the Kerala Renaissance (*Navodhanam*) movements, tenancy land reforms, and the devolution of planning authority to Panchayati Raj institutions—demonstrate how organized collective action can dismantle entrenched institutional privileges.

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4. Systematic Sociological Examination of Theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist)

The scholarly examination of **Theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist)** constitutes an indispensable analytical domain within *Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management*. In sociological epistemology, social phenomena are neither arbitrary behavioral aggregates nor biologically predetermined necessities; rather, they represent emergent structural configurations shaped by historical trajectories, institutional mechanisms, power relations, and normative consensus.

When interrogating theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist), sociologists examine the dynamic interplay between microscopic individual agency and macroscopic structural constraints. Every social institution or practice operates through established networks of socialization, sanctions, and structural incentives that reproduce stability while generating internal contradictions that drive progressive social transformation.

4.1. Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemological Frameworks

Contemporary sociological literature concerning theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist) is characterized by profound theoretical plurality. The structural-functionalist tradition—derived from Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton—interrogates this domain through functional prerequisites, institutional integration, and equilibrium maintenance, distinguishing between manifest objectives and latent structural consequences.

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4.2. Institutional Mechanics and Empirical Realities

From an empirical perspective, the operational mechanics of theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist) must be examined within concrete socio-historical contexts. In developing societies and particularly in the complex social matrix of contemporary India, modern statutory laws, market forces, and constitutional values coexist alongside enduring traditional hierarchies of caste, kinship endogamy, and community networks.

Empirical field studies emphasize that social transformation is neither linear nor uniform. While urbanization, digital technology, democratic decentralization, and state welfare policies create new avenues for upward social mobility and civic participation, traditional elites often adapt, maintaining institutional control through informal patronage networks and economic monopolies. Understanding theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist) therefore requires rigorous empirical methodologies that combine quantitative demographic surveys with in-depth qualitative field ethnography.

4.3. Contemporary Policy Debates and Regional Applications

Within the context of Keralam and the wider Indian subcontinent, the practical implications of theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist) are directly manifested in contemporary policy interventions and grassroots mobilizations. Historical social reforms—notably the Kerala Renaissance (*Navodhanam*) movements, tenancy land reforms, and the devolution of planning authority to Panchayati Raj institutions—demonstrate how organized collective action can dismantle entrenched institutional privileges.

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5. Systematic Sociological Examination of Social-Role Theory, Social stratification theory, and Indian Theory of Ashrama Dharmas

The scholarly examination of **Social-Role Theory, Social stratification theory, and Indian Theory of Ashrama Dharmas** constitutes an indispensable analytical domain within *Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management*. In sociological epistemology, social phenomena are neither arbitrary behavioral

aggregates nor biologically predetermined necessities; rather, they represent emergent structural configurations shaped by historical trajectories, institutional mechanisms, power relations, and normative consensus.

When interrogating social-role theory, social stratification theory, and indian theory of ashrama dharmas, sociologists examine the dynamic interplay between microscopic individual agency and macroscopic structural constraints. Every social institution or practice operates through established networks of socialization, sanctions, and structural incentives that reproduce stability while generating internal contradictions that drive progressive social transformation.

5.1. Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemological Frameworks

Contemporary sociological literature concerning social-role theory, social stratification theory, and indian theory of ashrama dharmas is characterized by profound theoretical plurality. The structural-functionalist tradition—derived from Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K. Merton—interrogates this domain through functional prerequisites, institutional integration, and equilibrium maintenance, distinguishing between manifest objectives and latent structural consequences.

Conversely, critical conflict paradigms and Marxist traditions—elaborated by Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and contemporary critical theorists—unmask how institutional arrangements surrounding social-role theory, social stratification theory, and indian theory of ashrama dharmas reflect underlying relations of production, class exploitation, and ideological hegemony. Furthermore, feminist and subaltern perspectives illuminate how patriarchal structures, graded caste inequalities, and colonial legacies intersect to marginalise subordinate social groups within these institutional networks.

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From an empirical perspective, the operational mechanics of social-role theory, social stratification theory, and indian theory of ashrama dharmas must be examined within concrete socio-historical contexts. In developing societies and particularly in the complex social matrix of contemporary India, modern statutory laws, market forces, and constitutional values coexist alongside enduring traditional hierarchies of caste, kinship endogamy, and community networks.

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6. Systematic Sociological Examination of Psychosocial theories- Erikson, Buhler and Jung's Theory, Levinson's Theory

The scholarly examination of **Psychosocial theories- Erikson, Buhler and Jung's Theory, Levinson's Theory** constitutes an indispensable analytical domain within *Sociology of Aging and Old Age Home Management*. In sociological epistemology, social phenomena are neither arbitrary behavioral aggregates nor biologically predetermined necessities; rather, they represent emergent structural configurations shaped by historical trajectories, institutional mechanisms, power relations, and normative consensus.

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6.1. Theoretical Paradigms and Epistemological Frameworks

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7. Systematic Sociological Examination of Social construction of aging and ageism Ageing A Reader, Rawat Publications, New Delhi Opportunities, Hodder Arnold, New Delhi Publishing , New Delhi Warner Schaie Ferraro Sasser Kunkel Henderson and Rebecca L. Utz Priyadarshi Patnaik and Francis X. Clooney and Janette Webb

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3. Classical & Modern Sociological Epistemologies: Structural Dynamics of INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING

The systematic academic investigation of **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING** within the discipline of sociology requires an interrogation of foundational theoretical paradigms. Classical sociological thought—anchored in the foundational works of Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber—established divergent epistemological trajectories for examining social reality. In analyzing gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope, structural-functionalist approaches emphasize the systemic equilibrium, functional prerequisites, and integration mechanisms that preserve social continuity across generations.

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Conversely, critical and dialectical traditions analyze how gerontology- definition, concept, history, importance, and scope serves as an arena of structural contestation, ideological reproduction, and differential access to material resources. Under historical materialism, institutional configurations cannot be analyzed in isolation from the prevailing relations of production and class antagonisms. Applying this critical perspective illuminates how historical transformations reshape normative expectations, occupational hierarchies, and the distribution of social status.

Sociological Paradigm	Core Analytical Lens	Primary Theoretical Focus	Application to INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOG
Structural Functionalism	Equilibrium & Functional Adaptation	Normative consensus, role differentiation, integration	Interprets systemic continuity and institutional stability.
Conflict & Critical Theory	Structural Inequality & Hegemony	Power asymmetries, resource monopolies, ideological dominance	Unmasks exploitation, marginalisation, and institutional control.
Symbolic Interactionism	Intersubjective Meaning & Agency	Micro-level interactions, definition of the situation, symbols	Examines how actors negotiate roles and construct identity.
Post-Structural / Subaltern	Discourse, Power & Marginality	Deconstruction of hegemony, localized resistances, standpoint	Highlights silenced narratives and localized social movements.

Furthermore, interpretative sociology, pioneered by Max Weber's concept of *Verstehen* (empathic understanding) and later elaborated by symbolic interactionists like George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman, highlights the centrality of subjective meaning in social action. Applying this interpretive framework to demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging demonstrates that social actors are neither passive cultural automatons nor wholly detached rational decision-makers; rather, they continually negotiate, construct, and modify institutional realities through everyday social interactions and communicative rituals.

4. Institutional Mechanics, Empirical Fieldwork & Indian Sociological Realities

Within the context of contemporary Indian society, the analysis of **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING** takes on profound empirical complexity. Indian sociological scholarship—pioneered by thinkers such as G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, Irawati Karve, A.R. Desai, and B.R. Ambedkar—demonstrates that Western theoretical models must be critically re-examined when confronted with the unique intersection of caste, class, gender, community, and region in South Asia.

When interrogating **Demographics of Aging, Characteristics of old age. Myths and stereotypes about aging**, researchers encounter the dual realities of continuity and change. While constitutional democracy, urbanization, industrial development, and legal reforms have modernized public institutions, primordial structures like caste hierarchies, endogamous marriage practices, and patriarchal kinship networks persist in redefined forms. M.N. Srinivas's seminal concepts of *Sanskritization* and the *Dominant Caste*, alongside A.R. Desai's political-economic critiques of agrarian capitalism, provide indispensable frameworks for understanding these contemporary contradictions.

In empirical sociological research, methodological rigor demands a careful synthesis of quantitative surveys and qualitative ethnography. Whether assessing social stratification, educational attainment, occupational mobility, or community welfare interventions, scholars must account for structural exclusions. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphatically demonstrated, the caste system is not merely a division of labour, but a hierarchical division of labourers based on graded inequality. In the context of theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist), understanding these deep-seated structural barriers is essential for designing effective social welfare policies and affirmative action programs.

5. Kerala Experience: Public Action, Social Transformation & Democratic Decentralisation

A foundational requirement of the Calicut University CUFYUGP 2024 curriculum is the contextualisation of sociological principles within the historical and contemporary realities of Keralam. The "Kerala Model of Development"—characterized by high human development indicators (exceptional literacy rates, high life expectancy, and low infant mortality rates) despite moderate per capita economic growth—serves as a world-renowned case study in sociology.

The social genesis of contemporary Kerala is directly rooted in the *Navodhanam* (Renaissance) movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Visionary social reformers—including Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, Poykayil Yohannan (Kumara Gurudevan), and V.T. Bhattathiripad—mobilized subaltern communities to challenge untouchability, temple entry restrictions, dress codes, and educational exclusions. Their historic struggles transformed caste-based feudal servitude into a vibrant culture of public action, civic participation, and democratic consciousness.

Historical / Institutional Catalyst	Primary Sociological Dimension	Key Historical Milestones	Structural Impact on Kerala Society
Socio-Religious Reform (Navodhanam)	Subaltern Mobilization & Caste Reform	Aruvippuram Consecration (1888), Villuvandi Samaram (1893)	Dismantled ritual pollution and opened public schools to Dalits.
Agrarian Land Reforms	Tenancy Abolition & Land Redistribution	Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act 1969	Abolished feudal landlordism (Janmi system) and conferred hutment rights.
Democratic Decentralisation	Grassroots Governance & Planning	People's Plan Campaign (1996), Panchayati Raj	Devolved 35–40% of state developmental funds to local self-governments.
Kudumbashree Mission	Women's Empowerment & Social Capital	State Poverty Eradication Mission (1998)	Mobilized millions of women into neighborhood self-help networks.

In contemporary sociological discourse, the Kerala experience also presents emerging second-generation challenges directly relevant to INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING. These include an accelerating demographic transition characterized by population aging, escalating healthcare and geriatric care demands, persistent educated unemployment, youth out-migration, ecological fragility, and the complex integration of interstate migrant workers within the domestic informal economy.

6. Methodological Innovations, Fieldwork Ethics & Epistemological Synthesis

Methodological integrity lies at the heart of empirical sociology. When investigating **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF AGING**, researchers must navigate the intricate tensions between quantitative positivistic measurement and qualitative phenomenological interpretation. Social phenomena cannot be fully captured through detached statistical quantification alone; researchers must engage directly with the lived experiences, cultural narratives, and subjective worldviews of social actors.

In conducting sociological fieldwork on demographics of aging, characteristics of old age. myths and stereotypes about aging and theoretical perspectives on aging (functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist), ethical considerations are paramount. Modern fieldworkers must maintain reflexivity—acknowledging their own social positionality, cultural biases, and power relationships relative to research participants. The ethical mandate of informed consent, confidentiality, anonymization of sensitive biographical data, and the protection of vulnerable communities (such as tribal populations, Dalit households, and elderly dependents) forms the bedrock of credible sociological inquiry.

By synthesizing classical theoretical traditions, contemporary critical perspectives, empirical survey techniques, and localized fieldwork observations, undergraduate students develop a mature sociological imagination. This intellectual capacity empowers graduates to decipher the latent structural forces governing modern social formations, critically evaluate public policies, and contribute constructively to progressive, inclusive social development.

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