



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

Title of the Research: “Aging and Marginalized Masculinity: Challenges of Older Christian Men in Sialkot, Pakistan”

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**Course: SOCL 699 A: Final Year Independent Research Project
2025-2026**

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ABSTRACT

The research examined the experience and negotiation of masculinity in later life among older Christian males in Sialkot in the context of aging and minority status. In Pakistan, the social construct of masculinity is based on concepts like authority, financial responsibility, breadwinner status and physical ability. However, age poses obstacles to the fulfillment of these social roles as the older men experience a decline in physical health and financial independence. The Christian male, being part of a religious minority group, faces even more hurdles, including discrimination and resource deprivation. Declining intersectionality framework, this research aims to examine the impact of aging, gender and minority on Christian males in Sialkot. The research objectives include: (1) To investigate that how older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan, relate to masculinity in the context of aging, which is typically accompanied by physical decline, economic challenges, and social marginalization. (2) To examine that how different intersecting factors such as class, education, marital status, and minority religious identity shape variations in their experiences of aging and masculinity. (3) To explore how these older men, preserve, adapt, or transform their masculine identity, highlighting the experiences of an under researched group to broaden understanding of gender in Pakistan. The researcher adopted qualitative methodology for the data collection and analysis process. An in-depth interview technique was employed with 15 Christian male participants, who were selected through purposive sampling technique, from the area known as Christian Town Sialkot. The participants varied in term of their socioeconomic status, education and occupation. The process of data collection involved thematic analysis to identify key themes in the lives of the participants. Some of the important findings include: (1) Aging greatly impacts male perceptions of masculinity, especially due to decline in physical strength, ability and authority at within the family. Most of the participants reported feelings of dependency, lack of

respect within society and family, and emotional suppression. Moreover, their status as a religious minority highlighted their experiences of discrimination, exclusion and lack of opportunities (3) In spite of these challenges, some participants redefined their masculine identities through patience, spirituality and emotional resilience. Additionally, the findings of this study aim to contribute to the scant literature on elder minority men in Pakistan and provide significant insights for the policymakers, social workers, and community organizations in devising inclusive policies and support systems. This study also highlights the importance of promoting older men's wellbeing, their dignity, and social inclusion in society.

Keywords: masculinity, aging, minority men, intersectionality, Sialkot

Chapter 1 Introduction

The concept of aging is more than a biological process; instead, it is a social and cultural phenomenon which is influenced by the intersection of identities, religion and socioeconomic status. Aging can be considered as a process in which the social prestige of the elder people as the head of family, dominant and authoritative figures gradually begin to fade due to changes in societal structures and values, often leading to their marginalization status and a decline in social standing. Whereas, in Pakistan, where masculinity is often tied around the ideas of strength, authority, and economic productivity, the aging process can be particularly challenging for the men who lose access to these markers of social value. Moreover, masculinity refers to qualities and the attributes which are culturally assigned to men.

Masculinity has been linked with traits such as headship, authority, value of temperament, power, courageousness, liberation and problem solver. (Adil, Shahed, & Arshad, 2017). The culture of Pakistan is generally influenced by a masculine mindset (Aslam, Mehmood, & Saeed, 2022). Across South Asia, masculinity plays a significant role in defining what it means to be a man, with a focus on strength, authority, and the ability to provide for one's family (Kumar, 2025). Masculinity in Pakistan is pre-dominantly linked with characteristics such as aggression, decision making, controlling etc. to fulfill the protector's role and remaining shield for family (Kamal, 2016). However, as aged men face the realities of declining health, decreased wealth, and the shifting roles in the family and community, these markers of masculine identity frequently become challenging to uphold as they age.

Studies on men aged 70 and older show how masculinity affects their lives as they get older, especially when it comes to money, independence, and showing emotions. Participants in the study linked financial stability with their capacity to maintain their dignity, lifestyle, and health

(King et al., 2020). For men who belongs to marginalized communities, the situation becomes much more complicated. Research on minority aging emphasize that age, race, ethnicity, gender, and social status interact to create distinct experiences in later life. Intersectionality theory explains that how overlapping identities and social conditions shape unique challenges for aging men in marginalized groups. (Thomas et al., 2023). The challenges faced by elderly individuals and member of religious minorities combine to create a complex web of disadvantage for Christian males in Sialkot. These men experience discrimination, less social visibility, and limited access to resources in addition to the decline that comes with aging.

Although there is increased interest in searching on gender and aging and is becoming more popular, these studies frequently generalize masculine experiences without taking into consideration minority and religious identities. The intersection of masculinities and aging received scant theoretical analysis (Tarrant & Bartholomaeus, 2016) and those studies studies that do exist focus on retirement, physical deterioration, and lower income without addressing the ways in which these factors interact with minority status (Lucea, 2017). This disparity highlights the need to seek that how older men cope with the combined challenges of age, social expectations, and minority status in order to retain, their male identities. Thus, this research focuses on how older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan, experience masculinity as they age and to explore the challenges, they experience in preserving and managing masculine roles in the context of aging, declining in physical and economic power and marginalization.

Aging has an effect on older Christian men's emotional and psychological aspects of masculinity along with contribution to these structural issues. Men are required to preserve emotional strength, independence, and authority over family affairs throughout their lifetimes in many traditional societies, such as Pakistan. It's common to look at displaying weakness,

loneliness, or reliance as an obstacle to one's manly masculine identity. Men may feel frustrated, devalued and socially isolated as they age and become financially or physically dependent on their children.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The culture of Pakistan is strongly based on a masculine perspective, where masculinity is associated with characteristics such as being strong, authoritative, independence and emotional restraint. But, as men get older they often experience a decline in physical strength, economic power and social authority which makes it hard for them to maintain these traditional ideals of masculinity. In addition, those men who belong to religious minorities, specifically Christians in Sialkot, face additional challenges such as discrimination, marginalization and limited access to opportunities, which further complicate their masculine roles. There is however a significant gap in prior studies, as few studies have explored how aging and minority status intersect to create unique challenges for older Christian men in maintaining their masculinity. Therefore, there is a need for this study to explore and investigate the challenges these men face in negotiating masculinity within the context of aging, societal expectations and minority status.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To investigate that how older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan, relate to masculinity in context of aging, which is typically accompanied by physical decline, economic challenges, and social marginalization.
2. To examine that how different intersecting factors such as class, education, marital status, and minority religious identity shape variations in their experiences of aging and masculinity.

3. To explore how these older men, preserve, adapt, or transform their masculine identity, highlighting the experiences of an under researched group to broaden understanding of gender in Pakistan.

1.3 Significance of Study

This research is significant as it contributes to the scant academic literature on masculinity, aging and minority experiences in Pakistan, specifically focusing on older Christian men who are often under researched. Most studies on masculinity in Pakistan primarily focused on young men, dominant groups or general male experiences, while the lived experiences of older men from religious minority communities often remained overlooked. By using an intersectionality lens, this research explores how age, gender and minority status affect the lived experiences of older Christian men in Sialkot. The study also shows how physical decline, decreased financial power and changing family dynamics influence men's self-worth, identity and emotional well-being in later life.

In addition, this research also paves the way for further studies on minority aging and masculinity in Pakistan, opening space for more inclusive discussion on gender and later life. Overall, the study highlights the awareness and importance about the dignity, respect and social inclusion of older minority men and emphasizes the need to recognize their challenges and contributions within society.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. How do older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan, define and experience masculinity in the context of aging?
2. What challenges do older Christian men face in maintaining traditional masculine roles in the context of aging particularly in relation to physical decline and social marginalization.
3. What strategies do minority men employ to sustain, adapt, or redefine their masculine identity, and how do these practices broaden the understanding of masculinity in Pakistan?

1.5 Conceptual Definitions

1.5.1 Aging

Aging refers to the ways in which a person's role in society changes during the aging process (Hunter & Kowalczyk, 2023). In this study, aging is considered as a socially and culturally constructed process through which elderly individuals experience changes in physical strength, emotional and social capacities in later life. Aging related experiences are shaped by the interaction between individual lived experiences and broader social, cultural and institutional contexts.

1.5.2 Masculinity

Masculinity is a set of traits and behaviors that are related to men (UNGEI, 2025). At its core, masculinity refers to qualities and attributes culturally assigned to men and has been associated with traits such as strength, assertiveness, dominance, independence, and emotional restraint (Sociology, 2024). In this study, masculinity refers to the culturally dominant ideals of

manhood that emphasize authority, economic provision, physical strength, social respect, and control within family and community life.

1.5.3 Marginalized Masculinity

The concept of marginalized masculinity refers to types of male identity that are viewed as a subordinate or less valued within the broader spectrum of masculinity. This concept highlights that how certain group of men, often based on race, class, sexuality, or other factors, experience their masculinity in ways that is contrary from the dominant ideals, which are often associated as power and control (Fiveable, 2024). Marginalized masculinity, in the context of this research, describes the forms of masculine identity experienced by older Christian men in Sialkot, which are constrained by aging, declining physical and economic power, minority religious status, and social marginalization.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Sialkot is an industrial city of Punjab, Pakistan, where religious minority communities, especially Christians, form a significant part of the population. Despite the presence of Christians in Sialkot they suffer from the various forms of discrimination and exclusion from the various aspects of social and economic marginalization, limited opportunities and exclusion in different areas of life. For elderly men in the Christian faith, the above challenges become more complex with their age, as they also face physical decline, reduced earning capacity, loss of authority within the family and changing expectations of masculinity. In a society where masculinity is strongly defined with strength, breadwinning and control growing older can deeply affect their sense of identity and self-worth. Unfortunately, there has been limited research conducted to understand the lived experiences of older Christian men and how they negotiate their masculinity in later life, especially within the context of religious minority status.

2.1 Masculinity as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon

Social and cultural traditions frequently shape what it means to be a man. (Roy, 2023) Masculinity is a set of traits and behaviors that are related to men. At its core, masculinity refers to qualities and attributes culturally assigned to men and has been associated with traits such as strength, assertiveness, dominance, independence, and emotional restraint (Connell, 2020). As aggressive behavior fits the cultural pattern of masculinity, it is often accepted from men when it fails to cause significant harm on the account of the fact that it aligns with the cultural script of masculinity a script written by society (Godalla, 2022).

The culture of Pakistan is characterized by a masculine mindset (Aslam, 2022). In South Asia, masculinity plays a pivotal role in defining what it means to be a man, with a focus on strength,

authority, and the ability to provide for one's family. In many South Asian cultures, men are expected to be the primary decision-makers and earners (Kumar, 2025). Masculinity in Pakistan is predominantly associated with characteristics such as aggression, dominance, strength, courage and control. These characteristics result from a combination of cultural and social influences and relate to the power in society as a whole. Moreover, in Pakistan's patriarchal society, a man is often perceived as ideal when he asserts authority through physical strength and exercises various form of power such as muscular, decision making, and control to fulfill the role of protector for his family. (Ramzan & Javaid, 2026). Additionally, Pakistani television dramas frequently portray dominant and authoritarian male figures who reinforce patriarchal norms. Furthermore, political and populist masculinities also shape the traditional masculinities. Leaders such as Imran Khan embody what has been termed "redeemed Sufi masculinity" which combines spiritual salvation, heteronormative ideals and military strength. This model of masculinity while glorifying resilience and power, also reinforces traditional gender hierarchies and supports patriarchal structures social structures. Thus the construction of masculinity in Pakistan and South Asia more broadly remains complex and layered influenced by religion, media politics and social expectations that continue to define what it means to be a traditional man (Iftikhar, 2014). Even while research on gender and aging is becoming more popular, these studies frequently generalize masculine experiences without taking into consideration minority and religious identities. The intersection of masculinities and aging has got little theoretical attention (Tarrant & Bartholomaeus, 2016) and the few studies that do exist focus on retirement, physical deterioration, and lower income but hardly examine the ways in which these factors interact with minority status (Lucea, 2017).

2.2 Aging and the Changing Roles of Men in Society

Aging can be defined as a process in which the traditional role of elders as respected family leaders and decision-makers diminishes due to changing societal structures and values, often leading to their marginalization and a decline in social standing. Aging refers to the ways in which a person's role in society changes during the aging process (Hunter & Kowalczyk, 2023).

As similar to feminist research, which for several years neglected the experiences and situations of older women, research on masculinity has also largely overlooked the lives of older men. As several researchers have pointed out that the study on this group is scant (Glendenning & Charpentier, 2017)

Experience is never constant and stable it keeps evolving which pushes individuals to think, reflect and make sense of their lives. The realization of getting older gradually and unavoidably distances men from the standards set by hegemonic masculinity. (Glendenning & Charpentier, 2017). Older men are assumed to have a weaker form of masculinity, as aging is accompanied by, reduced independence, fading relationships, and decline in both physical and emotional strength (Thomas & Thurnell-Read, 2024). In older age, masculine identity is challenged by retirement, deteriorating health, and lower income, which compels older men to reevaluate their self-worth. The findings of a study revealed that elderly individuals experience emotional health crises and sadness as they age. (Lucea, 2017). Studies on men aged 80 years and above show how their masculinity related experiences are effected by their age, especially when it comes to money, independence, and showing emotions. (King & Dow, 2020).

2.3 Christian Minority in Pakistan- Challenges of Social Marginalization and exclusion

The Constitution of Pakistan upholds the principle of equal citizenship irrespective of religious differences and guarantees the protection and rights of minority communities (Patras, 2024) Pakistan is a country of several diverse cultures, ethnic and religious minorities. (Dayan & Ali, 2017). The 2023 census estimates that there are 3.3 million Christians in Pakistan or nearly about 1.37 percent of the country's overall population. Punjab has the greatest population of Christians with the number of 2.46 million (Minority Rights Group, 2025).

The Christian community in Pakistan face challenges related to limited initiative and leadership which negatively effects the social well-being of this minority group (Khokhar & Iqbal, 2024). This minority group often face social, cultural and economic marginalization which directly shapes how men within these community experience and express masculinity (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2020).

Christian men often face forms of discrimination that specifically target their socially expected roles as family leaders and providers. In Pakistani society masculinity is closely associated with responsibility, authority and the ability to support and protect the family. However, the challenges faced by Christian men are mostly visible and such obstacles and experiences weaken their economic stability and social authority that results in the loss of dignity which reinforces their broader experience of social marginalization and exclusion (Bontrager, 2022).

Within Christian context, social stigmatization refers to the negative labelling and discriminatory attitude that men may face in everyday social life. Such stigma often leads to social distancing, limited acceptance in society and exclusion making it difficult for affected men to participate fully in community and reduce the opportunities (Hiemstra, 2019). Religious

minorities in Pakistan often encounter extremism, discrimination and social exclusion in their daily lives which limits their participation in both social and political spheres. Older adults who experience social exclusion are likely to face for a longer period of their lives compared to individuals in other age groups. (Walsh & Keating, 2016).

In contemporary society, older individuals often experience social isolation and marginalization. Their abilities, contributions and relevance are frequently questioned both directly and indirectly, which reduces their sense of self-worth. Many older men face limited access to resources, occupying a lower social status and have little influence over decisions that affects their lives (Gelaw, 2025)

2.5 Aging and Economic Vulnerability

The global population is rapidly aging, with the number of people aged 60 years and above increasing at an unparalleled rate (Gelaw, 2025). This trend is a part of a long term demographic transition that began in 18th Century, initially characterized by decline in the rate of mortality and much later by a decrease in fertility rates (Ember & Kalodner, 2024). Asia is anticipated one of the most growing demographic shift with its older population expected to rise from about 549.2 million in 2017 to nearly 1.27 billion by 2050 (Gelaw, 2025). Studies suggest that aged adults are also economically vulnerable. According to Carmo and Guizardi (2018), explains that vulnerability in late life is broader, including not only financial insecurity but also unequal access to services and fragile social and emotional support system (Ribeiro & Teixeira, 2021). Existing literature reveals that the difficulties of older men are intensified by financial insecurity, as rising inflation and insufficient pension support make it difficult to meet basic needs and this leads towards the experience of social isolation and loneliness, and mostly feels rejected by both their families and society. This situation leads towards emotional distress, with few men expressing

feelings of hopelessness and a loss of purpose in life and this contributes to the declining of both mental and physical health, hence increasing their overall vulnerability in later life (Gelaw, 2025).

2.6 Family Structure, Authority and Intergenerational Relations

The family is regarded as the most essential and fundamental primary group within the society (Ayoob, 2020). Men play an important and a central role within the family and their active involvement benefits not only themselves but also their relationships and overall wellbeing of their family unit (Boyle, 2016). The way men express their roles within the family may distinguish across cultures, but there are certain aspects of the male role that remains consistent throughout life. In Pakistani society men are mostly seen as an essential for continuing the family lineage, providing strength and security to the household, ensuring the parents well-being in the old age and safe guarding the family's honor (Butt & Asad, 2017). Men mostly reinforce these roles by demonstrating gender expectations and adult behavior for the functioning and stability of the whole household (Bowman, 2016).

In many societies, older adults are not assigned with specific roles or tasks and often simply reduce their workload as their physical strength declines. There is a common myth that older adults are well-supported. In actual fact, their status and authority tends to be lowest in nuclear families. On the other hand, extended families show variations. Older adults frequently hold the highest status and authority in small extended families and generally lower in larger extended family settings (Ember & Kalodner, 2024). Older adults may experience a sense of being a burden to the younger generation they live with, especially when health issues and disabilities prevent them from actively participating in household activities (Biswas & Leshabari, 2015). Senior citizens also contribute actively to their families in many ways. They help in maintaining household routines,

offers guidance and counseling, ensure security, facilitates in socialization and solve the conflicts. They play these roles to firm their position and status in the society (Ayoob, 2020).

Building relations with younger generations allows older adults to experience a stronger sense of fulfillment. These interactions benefits both group, the older adults can pass on the emotional and social knowledge which they have and gained over their lifetime, while younger individuals gain diverse perspectives that help them develop social understanding and adaptability. The capacity of older adults to manage changes in health, income, social activities and other various aspects of life in later years largely depends on the support system they receive from their family members (Chadha, 2012). Relationship between older parents and their adult children plays a vital role in shaping the well-being of older adults. Vern L. Bengston, a contemporary sociologist, particularly developed the theory of intergenerational solidarity to explain the long-bonds between parents and children. The theory describes six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity (affectual, functional, structural, consensual, normative, associational). Together these dimensions explain that how support, emotional connection and shared expectations shapes the quality of intergenerational family relationships in later life (Torabian, Maryam & Reza, 2022)

2.7 Intersecting Identities of Gender, Religion and Social Status in Later Life

Intersectionality known as an analytical framework helps us understand how elements of both individual and group identity, such as gender, class, and religion, interact to create various experiences and social system agency (Alder, 2021). The intersection of identity, gender and religion has been extensively examined in sociology, gender studies and religious studies. These dimensions do not operate independently, instead they interact and shape one another within particular social, cultural and political context (Lubna, 2025). Despite the fact that masculinity and intersectionality originate from different theoretical traditions, these are complementary concepts

that can be used together to understand how multiple social hierarchies and power relations shape men's experiences (Wojnicka, 2024). Intersectionality highlights how multiple forms of disadvantage such as age, caste, race, socioeconomic status, employment and education interact with one another and significantly influence older adults access to and use of healthcare services (Agargol & Nair, 2024). The experiences of older individuals are strongly shaped by the gendered nature of aging. Although ageism affects men, these experiences cannot be understood through gender alone. From an intersectional perspective, later life is influenced by the interaction of multiple identities, particularly gender, religious minorities, aging and masculinity are constructed at the intersection of their gender role expectations, minority religious identity and socioeconomic position. These overlapping identities shape their social position, opportunities and everyday experiences within the wider society in later life (Age Platform, 2022).

2.8 Social Support, Community Networks and Coping Mechanism

When old adult's experiences situations they perceive as stressful they often feel emotional distress. To tackle these situations and their emotions they use different coping strategies (Desmet, Dezzutter & Dillen, 2022). The family is the most important and vital setting for meeting the needs of older adults. As life expectancy has increased, many retired men remain physically and mentally active and have strong social and emotional needs and they wish to stay connected with their family (Swiderska, 2014). Older adults who are surrounded around their family generally have better quality of life than those who are living in nursing homes. A study describes that the financial support from family members resulted with lower levels of depression. Emotional support is also very important especially for highly depended older adults as it builds trust and reduces the feelings of loneliness (Rekawati, Istifada & Sari, 2019) Family support also helps older adults take better

care of their health by ensuring that they eat properly, take their medicines on time, go to medical appointments and stay physically active (Lidder, 2025).

Neighborhood services refers to the help given by the community to the elderly adults especially when their family is unable to care for them (Subocz, 2024). Some older adults may not have their family nearby as in result they receive limited support from them. In such cases, support, help and attachment from friends and neighbors become more important because it is more easily available. Good relations with neighbors provide informal help, reduce feeling of loneliness and make it easier for them to manage daily life and to cope with the feeling of isolation, depression and declining health (Seifert & Konig, 2019).

Older adults often face difficult life situations and religion can provide them with support and guidance to cope with these challenges. It can play an important role to cope with stress. Religious coping helps people deal with difficult events by giving them a framework to find meaning in situations such as illness, loneliness, depression, suffering and other hardships (Desmet, Dezzutter & Dillen, 2022). Prayer has been practiced as a spiritual discipline by major religious groups since ancient times. In Christianity, prayer is mostly used as a form of compassionate care (South & McDowell, 2018). Research suggests that prayer helps older adults cope effectively with traumatic events and life challenges, fostering a sense of peaceful acceptance. For old adults' prayer provides a way to adapt to the difficulties of aging and achieve inner peace. In one study, participants described their experience with prayer as deeply calming:

Many seniors who regularly attend church report finding a sense of peace through their faith which helps them cope with health issues, financial problems, and loss of loved ones. Participation in church activities promotes hope, fosters a positive outlook and motivation in managing the challenges of aging (Olson, 2018).

2.9 Lived Experiences of Aging and Marginalization in Pakistan

The concept of marginalized masculinity refers to types of male identity that are viewed as a subordinate or less valued within the broader spectrum of masculinity. This concept highlights that how certain group of men, often based on race, class, sexuality, or other factors, experience their masculinity in ways that is contrary from the dominant ideals, which are often associated as power and control (Fiveable, 2024). The emerging challenges faced by minority groups have attracted considerable academic attention (Khan & Saddam, 2024). Members of these groups frequently encounter discrimination and unequal access to opportunities, which can challenge traditional masculine roles linked to authority and power.

For minority men, this structural exclusion creates what scholars describe as marginalized masculinity a form of masculinity that exist outside the dominant ideal and is shaped by restricted access to power and authority (UNHCR Emergency Handbook, 2025) Another system in Pakistan is the weak and unreliable pension system for retirees. With the retirement age set at 60 for men, only a small number of adults remain financially independent after leaving the workforce, leaving many vulnerable to economic insecurity (Cassum, Cash & Qidwai, 2020). In Pakistan, marginalized groups, especially religious minorities continue to experience systemic exclusion, which negatively affects their psychological health and social well-being (Firdous, Mehmood & Gull, 2025) Even while research on gender and aging is becoming more popular, these studies frequently generalize masculine experiences without taking into consideration minority and religious identities. The intersection of masculinities and aging has got little theoretical attention (Tarrant & Bartholomaeus, 2016) and the few studies that do exist focus on retirement, physical deterioration, and lower income but hardly examine the ways in which these factors interact with minority status (Lucea, 2017).

2.10 Gaps in Literature

The existing literature on masculinity in Pakistan majorly draw attention on younger men, dominant social groups and general male experiences with less focus given to older men and their changing masculine identities in later life. In similar, studies on aging often discuss physical health, dependency and social care but hardly examines that how aging affects men's sense of masculinity, dominancy, authority and self-worth. Study on religious minorities specifically on Christians in Pakistan mainly highlights issues of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion but does not particularly explore the experiences of older Christian men. Limited studies examine how age, gender and minority status intersect to redefine their everyday lives. Therefore, there is an obvious gap in understanding how older Christian men experience aging, negotiate their masculine identity and respond to the challenges of declining authority and social marginalization. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of older Christian men in Sialkot through an intersectionality lens.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Hegemonic Masculinity Theory

Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Raewyn Connell (1987) refers to a dominant social structure established by men in position of power that reinforces gender inequality within society. It operated through cultural norms and practices that privilege certain forms of masculinity while marginalizing others. The theory highlights the existence of hierarchy among masculinities, the unequal distribution of power and the influence of patriarchy on shaping men's identities, ideals and social interactions. (Jewkes & Morrell, 2015). The main features of this theory includes men's dominance over subordinate men, authority and control in decision making, breadwinning as a measure of masculine worth and physical strength as a symbol of capability and resilience.

Hegemonic masculinity theory is relevant to the current research because, it describes how society constructs an idealized picture of a "real man" who is strong, powerful, financially independent, and emotionally in charge. This theory helps in highlighting the difficulties older Christian males in Sialkot encounter when they are unable to fully meet these expectations. Their power in the family or society may diminish as they age, their physical strength may deteriorate, and their position as breadwinners may become less significant. Due to their existing low social standing, members of religious minorities face additional challenges. They find it more difficult to uphold the dominant masculine role and this study will examine how they perceive and respond to these difficulties.

3.2 Intersectionality Theory: Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality a concept introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) and later expanded by Patricia Hill Collins (1990), explains how different aspects of a person's identity such as gender, age, class, religion and ethnicity are interconnected to shape unique social experiences and inequalities. Rather than reviewing these identities separately intersectionality emphasizes that they overlap and influence one another creating complex layers of privilege and discrimination.

In order to understand how older minority males, define masculinity in later life, this study uses intersectionality as a lens. This theory highlights the ways in which age, gender, and religious identity interact to create particular difficulties. These men deal with the negative effects of being a member of a marginalized religious community in addition to the physical and social changes that come with aging. They also have to deal with the pressures of society's expectations of being men. According to this viewpoint, the study will demonstrate how these intersecting identities influence their attempts to uphold male roles as well as the coping mechanisms and adaptation techniques they employ.

3.3 Continuity Theory of Aging

Continuity theory of Aging, developed by Robert Atchley, explain that older adults try to maintain consistency in their habits, values, roles and relationships as they grow older. According to this theory, people adjust to aging by continuing the patterns of life they followed in earlier stages. Instead of completely changing themselves, they try to preserve their identity by adapting old roles to new life conditions. This theory is relevant to this study because olden Christian men often try to maintain their masculine identity as providers, decision-makers and respected family

members even when aging reduces their physical strength and earning capacity. They continue to seek respect, authority and social value through experience, wisdom and emotional support showing continuity in their sense of masculinity despite life changes.

3.4 Disengagement Theory

Disengagement Theory of Aging, developed by Elanie Cumming and Willam E. Hnery, explains that aging is a natural process in which older adults gradually withdraw from social roles, responsibilities and relationship while society also expects less participation from them. Older people may reduce involvement in work, family decision-making and public life as their physical and social capacities decline. This theory is important to this study because many older Christian men experience a loss of authority, reduced financial contribution and less involvement in family decisions. Their declining role in both family and society affects their masculine identity, making disengagement theory useful for understanding how aging changes their position and self-perception in later life.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to explore and analyze the experiences of aging and marginalized masculinity among older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to identify detailed insights of participant's thoughts, emotions and experiences which are necessary to understand the complex realities of aging and marginalized masculinity within the Christian men.

The phenomenological approach involves exploring and understanding individuals lived experiences and the meaning attached to those experiences (McLeod, 2024). This study used descriptive phenomenology to understand and interpret how older men experience and define masculinity in their lives. It focuses on how these men make sense of their experiences, roles and identities especially in the context of aging and changing social expectations.

4.2 Research Site

The research site of this study is Christian Town, Sialkot, a neighborhood with a significant Christian minority population in an industrial city of Punjab, Pakistan. It was selected because it provides a relevant setting to explore how older Christian men experience aging, masculinity and social marginalization in their everyday lives. The area reflects limited access to social and economic opportunities which help in understanding how minority status and aging together shape their lives experiences.

4.3 Sampling Design

Purposive sampling is a common non-probability sampling method. It helps in gaining detailed and context-based understanding. It involves deliberately selecting specific individuals, cases or event that are most relevant to the research question allowing researchers to explore complex issues in depth (Jawad, 2024). It allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants who had direct and meaningful experience related to the research topic. Since the aim of this study was to explore how masculinity is understood and experienced in old age, it was important to choose individuals who could provide deep and relevant insights.

Thus, elderly Christian males aged 65 years and above were chosen for the sample study, as they represent both an aging population and a religious minority group. The use of this sampling technique was particularly appropriate because it ensured that the sample consisted only those participants who could reflect on their life experiences, social roles and changing perceptions of masculinity in later life.

4.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

Participants were chosen through purposive sampling technique, based on particular inclusion criteria essential to the research objectives. The research focused on elderly male participants who were 65 years of age or above, self-identified as Christians, and were currently living in Christian Town Sialkot, Pakistan. Only biological males were incorporated in the study to maintain consistency with the research focus on masculinity in old age. Participants were also selected from diverse socio-economic, educational, occupational, and martial backgrounds to ensure variation in experiences and perspectives. Purposive sampling was employed to intentionally select participants who possessed direct experience related to the phenomenon under study and were able to provide rich, detailed, and meaningful insights.

For the in-depth interviews, a total number of 15 participants were selected using purposive sampling. The use to purposive sampling was particularly appropriate for this qualitative study, as the primary aim was to gain in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences rather than to achieve generalizability.

4.3.2 Number of Participants

By using purposive sampling method, a total of 15 participants were selected for this study. The sample was composed of Christian men aged 65 years and above from Sialkot. Participants' diversity was assured in terms of occupational background, socio-economic status, educational level and marital status.

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Participant	Age	Occupation	Education	Marital Status
P1	67	Factory Employee	Intermediate	Married
P2	65	Business	-	Married
P3	68	Factory Employee	Matric	Married
P4	70	Retired	Intermediate	Widower
P5	65	Attendant at Medical College	Intermediate	Married
P6	66	Van Driver	Under Matric	Married
P7	67	Factory Employee	Under Matric	Married
P8	72	Business Man	BA	Married
P9	65	Security Guard	Matric	Widower

P10	68	Factory Employee	-	Divorced
P11	70	Factory Employee	Intermediate	Married
P12	66	Factory Employee	Intermediate	Married
P13	71	Business Man	-	Married
P14	65	Factory Employee	-	Married
P15	72	Business Man	Matric	Married

4.4 Data Collection Method

4.4.1 Pilot Testing

The researcher conducted the pilot testing with three participants prior to the main interviews to ensure that the interview questions were clear, easy to understand and related to study. The researcher was also able to assess the participants comfort level in addressing their personal experiences.

Through this process researcher was able to recognize any issues related to confusion, sensitive topics or communication barriers. Based on the feedback made during the pilot testing, the researcher revised and improved the interview guide by modifying certain questions and making the overall flow more smooth and participant-friendly. This ensured that the actual data collection process was more effective and reliable.

4.4.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews (IDIs) were employed as the main form of data collection method that helped the researcher in gaining a deep understanding of the participant's perception, personal

experiences and challenges related to aging, masculinity and marginalization. Through in-depth interviews, the participants were able to openly narrate their life stories, their experiences, feelings and perceptions. According to Kimberly Houston (2025) open-ended interviews allowed the participants to express themselves openly, giving detailed explanation rather than limited predefined answers.

Through in-depth interviews process, the researcher delved into the participant's personal understanding of masculinity, including what it means to be a "man" and how these perceptions changes with age. The interviews also looked into the impact of how aging effects men's roles, specifically his role as a provider and decision maker within his family and community. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences of physical aging, economic challenges and shifts in respect with family and community. Moreover, the interviews sought to examine how being a Christian minority may shape their experiences of aging and exclusion.

4.4.3 Tool for Data Collection

The interview guide was chosen as the main instrument for data collection. The development of instrument was based on the objectives of the study to find out that how older Christian men understand and experience masculinity in their later life. By using deductive information derived from the relevant literature the researcher developed the interview guide. The perception of masculinity, the shift in the authoritative role in the context of aging, and the financial difficulties associated with aging were the main areas covered by the deductive code that aided in the creation of the interview guide.

The interview guide was divided into two sections: the first section asked questions about the socio-demographic information of the participants, like age, education, occupation, marital

status and family background. The second section included questions related to their lived experiences of masculinity in the context of aging and marginalization primarily focusing on issues such as changing family roles, loss of authority, emotional experiences, social exclusion and the effects of being a minority on their life.

4.4.4 Data Collection Process

Through in-depth interviews the data was collected, which allowed participants to openly share their lived experiences and their perceptions related to masculinity, changes in power, decision making authority and social status with age, as well as the obstacles they encounter as older Christian men.

The researcher is a Christian who lives in Christian Town Sialkot. Given that the participants were members of the Christian Town Sialkot; they were accessed through the researcher's church. No official gatekeeper was used; however, familiarity with the community made it possible in approaching participants. The interviews took place within the church premises, which made the setting comfortable and familiar environment for the participants.

The duration of each interview lasted between 40-90 minutes, but one participant interview did not last the expected duration as the participant was not feeling comfortable in sharing remembering his past experiences.

In order to facilitate communication, the interviews were conducted in both Urdu and Punjabi languages. Data was gathered using both written notes and audio recordings to ensure accuracy and completeness. The interview questions were flexible and open-ended. Follow up questions were also asked during the interview based on participant's responses to explore their experiences in greater depth. To ensure participant comfort and openness during interviews, a male

research assistant was hired and trained for the data collection process. Given that the study focused on masculinity among older men, the presence of a male researcher helped reduce hesitation and allowed participants to express their views more freely.

4.5 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which is useful for finding, analyzing and interpreting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. Because it allowed for a thorough understanding of participants' experiences of masculinity in old age within a minority culture, this approach was appropriate for the study.

Following steps were included in data analysis process:

4.5.1. Data Familiarization

In order to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the participants lived experiences, the first stage involved listening carefully to the interview recording and reading the transcriptions many time. Filed notes were also examined to gain better understanding of social and emotional contexts of older Christian men in Sialkot.

4.5.2. Data Coding

In order to find significant trends, recurring ideas, and important concepts related to traditional masculinity, aging and minority identity the data was methodically coded. Both inductive coding (emerging from participants' responses) and deductive coding (guided by theoretical concepts such as Hegemonic Masculinity and Intersectionality) were applied. The coding procedure was carried out manually to secure close engagement with the data.

4.5.3. Theme Development

Following coding, similar codes were combined together to develop broader themes. These themes emphasized important aspects of participants' lived experiences, majorly focusing on how traditional masculinity changes with age and how minority identity shapes these experiences.

4.5.4. Interpretation and Analysis

The themes that emerged were interpreted in the light to the research questions and theoretical framework, including Hegemonic Masculinity Theory and Intersectionality Theory. This analysis helped to understand the impact of aging and being minority on masculinity among older Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan.

4.5.5. Triangulation

The credibility and reliability of the results were improved with the help of triangulation by analyzing differences and similarities between the responses from participants of different background. Variations and similarities were examined among participants based on variables such as marital status, occupational background and socio-economic conditions. This process helped in verifying key patterns, reducing bias and strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings.

4.5.6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity was a crucial component of the whole research process. As a female Christian researcher studying elderly male participants, the researcher constantly considered her own assumptions, positionality and potential biases. While a shared religious identity helped to establish rapport and trust, deliberate efforts were made to maintain objectivity during data

interpretation. This ensured that participants' voices were represented accurately without personal influences.

4.5.7. Member Checking

By sharing preliminary interpretation and summaries with specified participants, member checking was done to increase the findings' credibility. Participants were able to confirm whether their experiences were accurately represented. Their input made the analysis better and made sure that the findings remained grounded in their lived realities.

4.5.8. Reporting

The findings of the qualitative analysis were put together and presented in a clear, structured and understandable way. To bolster the validity of the findings, key participant quotes were used to support each theme and sub-theme. The report included a thorough account of how in-depth description of how masculinity is experienced and transformed in old age among Christian men, emphasizing the impact of social, cultural and structural factors on their lives.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

The study closely adheres to ethical guidelines to guarantee each participant's rights and protection. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained and participation was voluntary. Participants were clearly informed about the study objectives, its procedures, and their right to quit at any time without any consequences.

Pseudonyms were employed to secure privacy and confidentiality, and all kind of identifying information was eliminated from the data. Participants in the study did not suffer any

harm, injury or discomfort and consideration was given to their age, minority status and individual life experiences.

In order to maintain privacy and confidentiality all data collected during the research, including digital files and audio recording, were securely stored and were removed from the data after the completion of study. These steps were taken to protect participant information and uphold ethical standards from unauthorized access or misuse.

4.7 Field Work Experiences

It was difficult and complicated to conduct the fieldwork for this study because some participants were initially anxious and unwilling to share their personal experiences, so the researcher had to establish trust and create a comfortable environment for open discussion. The process of reaching participants, engaging them in conversation and discussion on the subject that were sensitive due to the nature of masculinity, aging and minority identity during various phases of the research process. There were some participants who were initially hesitant to disclose their personal experiences, which required the researcher to build trust and create a comfortable environment for open discussion.

The experiences during the data collection process are listed below:

1. It took considerable effort and patience to conduct fieldwork by incorporating elderly male participants in in-depth discussions to explore their feelings and lived experiences related to aging.
2. It was difficult in understanding and interpreting participants' emotional expressions and deeply personal perspectives during the interview process.

3. The researcher encountered emotional difficulties during some interviews because participants shared sensitive and intense life narratives.
4. It was necessary to maintaining sensitivity, patience and care while asking questions to the participants because it was necessary to ensure that participants felt comfortable, valued and respected throughout the research process.
5. Although participants were generally cooperative, respectful towards the researcher, managing emotionally heavy conversations remained a constant challenge during the fieldwork.

Chapter 5 Thematic Analysis

The findings of the study highlighted how men perceived masculinity and how their experiences changed with age. The findings are based on the responses of 15 participants who shared their personal experiences and challenges regarding their masculine role and how their authority and social status changed with the increase in age. The findings showed that most of the participants described a man mainly as a responsible person and a provider of the family. Being financially stable and fulfilling all the needs of the family is considered as a basic and central responsibility related to a traditional masculine role. In addition, many participants also associated masculinity with authority and control, describing a man as a head of the family who takes decisions and handle all the matters. While discussing ideal masculinity, participants highlighted qualities such as responsibility, moral behavior, respect and discipline. Mostly men also describe ideal masculinity in the terms of firmness and control over household.

A major and crucial finding of the study is the change in masculine traditional role with age. Most participants said that as men grow older, they became empathic, calm, composed and less controlling. Mostly men describe a shift from a controlling position to a more advisory role, where they guide rather than command. Participants also describe a major shift in their decision making authority and the control over all the matters at home. They also describe that it was very difficult to handover their authority that added to their emotional struggles of older age.

Another important finding of this study is the participants' experiences of marginalization and discrimination. Most participants reported facing discrimination in their workplaces, including unfair treatment, limited opportunities and exclusion. They also shared that they were often subjected to taunts and negative remarks because of their religious identity. In addition, some

participants highlighted that their basic rights were ignored or denied, which further contributed to their sense of social and economic marginalization.

To handle and deal with challenges such as workplace discrimination, social marginalization, religious stigmatization and the denial of basic rights, participants employed different coping mechanisms. The most common coping strategy which they used is connecting with divine force through prayers that ultimately lead to calmness and relief in their life. Some of the participants said that they share their thoughts and feelings with their spouse, use silence as a coping strategy to avoid stress.

Finally, the study highlighted the significance of family support to ensure their wellbeing. Mostly participants expressed that they need emotional support, respect, care and time from the family members to reduce the feelings of loneliness and disconnectivity. During the interview, some questions were emotionally challenging stirred strong sentiments in the participants. Many participants expressed the feeling of being less powerful and excluded when the questions regarding handing over authority and decision-making power to their children were asked. Many participants found it difficult to internalize the process of aging due to the challenges associated with this phase of life. They responded to questions that directly addressed their experience of being old.

The entire findings of the current research revolve around the following main 8 themes,

Theme 1: Perception of Masculine Identity Across the Life Course

Theme 2: Negotiation of Traditional Roles, Authority and Changing Social Status

Theme 3: Economic and Physical Constraints in Fulfilling Masculinity

Theme 4: Intersection of Minority Identity, Aging and Socioeconomic Status in Shaping Masculinity

Theme 5: Experiencing Pressure and Coping Mechanism

Theme 6: Support Needs for sustaining Wellbeing

Theme 7: Reflective Experiences of Participation

Table 2
Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme	Codes	Relevant Quote
Perception of Masculine Identity Across the life Course	Add bullets before each code Masculinity as responsibility and provider role Authority and decision-making as core traits Social learning of masculinity (family influence)	“A man should be responsible. He should care for his wife and children, fulfill and manage all the needs and household expenses (Participant 3, Age 68, Factory Employee)
Negotiation of Traditional Roles, Authority and Changing Social Status	Shift from control to advisory role Shared decision-making with children Emotional struggle in losing authority	“Previously, I made all the decisions for the entire household; everything was under my control and managed all the responsibilities. But now, my children make most of the decisions, and I step back because I think I’m not responsible for everything with

			them.” (Participant 10, Age 68, Factory Employee)
Economic and Physical Constraints in fulfilling Masculinity	Declining physical strength Reduced financial capacity Health issues affecting roles		“Now I get tired. When I was young, I used to do a lot of work on the job but now I’m physically weak, which has an immensely negative impact on my finances too” (Participant 5, Age 65, Attendant at Medical College)
Intersection of Minority Identity, Aging and Socioeconomic Status in Shaping Masculinity	Workplace Discrimination based on religion Marginalization in public institutions Combined effect of age, religion and economic status		“As I am 66 years old now I get tired very quickly and I’m not able to earn and work actively as I am physically weak. I feel tired while driving” (Participant 6, Age 66, Van driver)
Experiencing Pressure and Coping Mechanism	Internal pressure to fulfill responsibilities Silent coping and avoidance strategies Religious coping through prayer		“I felt a lot of stress due to the responsibility of arranging my daughter’s marriage which caused me diabetes” (Participant 1, Age 67, Factory Employee)
Support Needs for Sustaining Wellbeing	Emotional support from family Need for respect, care and inclusion		“I want my children to respect my opinions as they used to respect me before. I want from

	Demand for financial and healthcare support	and my children to sit with me, listen to me, and spend some quality time with me” (Participant 14, Age 65, Factory Employee)
Reflective Experiences of Participation	Interviews as emotional expression Feeling heard and acknowledged Cathartic experience of sharing	“I feel that I’m talking to my daughter and at least there is someone who asks about my feelings. Now I’m old, how do I feel? What are my wishes?” (Participant 3, Age 68, Factory Employee)

5.1 Perception of Masculine Identity Across the Life Course

According to participant’s understanding, the concept of masculinity is deeply rooted in the social structure. While portraying what it means to be a man, participants consistently emphasized responsibility, authority and the role of being the head of the family. They described masculinity as closely linked with managing household matters and making important decisions for the family. Rather than viewing masculinity as an individual choice, participants understood it as a set of social expectations that men are expected to fulfill. Key qualities of an “ideal man” included being a provider and breadwinner, maintaining discipline within the household, taking responsibility for the family affairs, and ensuring the well-being of all family members.

“A man should be responsible. He should care for his wife and children, fulfilling and managing all their needs and expenses” (Participant 3, Age 68, Factory Employee)

“A man could be a good example in society if he has the ability to play a significant role in society.” (Participant 1, Age 67, Factory Employee)

“An ideal man should be a good decision maker. He should respect his wife and listen to her. He should have a strong personality and fulfill the needs of his children” (Participant 5, Age 65, Attendant in Medical College)

These responses highlights that how masculinity is strongly bonded to duty and responsibility within the family structure. At this stage, masculinity closely reflects socially dominant personality where men are expected to lead, head, provide and maintain power and authority.

These perceptions were not developed individually but were learned early in life through observing elders, family practices and broader cultural norms within society.

“My grandfather and father taught me all this. My grandfather was in army, so he was very strict about rules and regulations and had a firm and authoritative personality at home. By observing him, I learned that a man should be like this and behave in this way.” (Participant 4, Age 70, Retired)

“I developed my perception of how a man should be by observing my family, community, friends, society and by learning from the good and bad consequences of people’s actions around me.” (Participant 1, Age 67, Factory Employee)

These ideals align with Hegemonic Masculinity Theory (R. W Connell) where a socially valued form of masculinity is constructed around power, control and responsibility.

However, what is significant in this study is that the concept of masculinity does not remain fixed but evolve gradually as men move into older age. A noticeable transformation in their understanding and perception of masculinity is emerged. As earlier life reflects control, power, decision making and authority older age brought different perceptions and collection of expectations and adaptations. Participants depicted more patient, calm, less authoritative while interacting primarily with their children and opt the advisory role within their family. This change was not a choice nor simple, rather it is usually a response to changing family dynamics and less control.

“As a young man, I never shouted at my children or my wife; I used to make all the decisions. I had a firm, dominant and authoritative personality, but now I am a soft and calm person, and I don’t impose my decisions on my children.” (Participant 8, Age 72, Business man)

“At this age, I don’t make decisions in my family. I have completely handed over all the control, authority, and responsibility to my children. I only give them advice and share my life experiences. I support them by guiding them but not being dominant.” (Participant 1, Age 67, Factory Employee)

This shift indicates that masculinity is not static identity, but rather a process. It is a life-course process that changes over time. The definition linked to manhood gets change and varies on the bases of age, personal experiences, and social context. Men generally feel a strong sense of identity with the masculine ideals but their ability to express and fully practice these ideals often diminishes as they age. Most importantly, this shift or change is an internal negotiation process, where participants are not completely abandoning their earlier beliefs but rather modifying and refining them based on their current realities. To be responsible and having respect in the family and community remains expected, but the way it is expressed takes a different form as time goes

on. For instance, authority transformed to guidance, and control to patience. This is an ongoing process, which demonstrates that how men continually reconstructing their identities in response to changing life circumstances yet they still preserve the core fundamental values that define masculinity for them.

5.2 Negotiation of Traditional Roles, Authority and Changing Social Status

As participants got older, their narratives continue to reflect an ongoing effort to keep the traditional masculine roles expected that once defined their identity. Being a family provider, decision-maker and an authoritative figure within the family remained at the core of their perception of masculinity. However, within increasing age their capacity to actively participate and perform these roles diminished, creating a notable gap between expectations and lived reality.

Instead of losing all these roles completely, participants portrayed a process of negotiation within the family. Once there was authority, now it is shared or, in my cases, transferred to their children

One participant said that,

“Previously, I made all the decisions for the entire household; everything was under my control and managed all the responsibilities. But now, my children make most of the decisions, and I step back because I think I’m not responsible for everything with them.” (Participant 10, Age 68,

Factory Employee)

Despite all these changes, participants still perceive themselves as responsible person within the family. This emphasizes a contradiction: although their role is still robust., it is not present. Many participants moved away from controlling and authoritative role and adopted advisory position.

“Now I don’t get involved in every matter as I used to get before. I do share my perspective, but it is up to my children whether they follow it or not.” (Participant 2, Age 65, Business man)

Rather than disappearing completely this illustrates that how authority is replaced with guidance. During old age, many men may lose their direct control over family decisions, particularly when their children become independent and take on responsibilities of various matters at home. However, their role does not get vanish; instead, it becomes an advisory and a source of wisdom. Although their power or authority is no longer dominant or controlling, their life experiences, knowledge and emotional support intact to bring them respect within the family.

However, this shift was not always easy on the emotional side, often difficult. The loss of control was seen as a decline in their personal value and respect. Many of the participants expressed the idea that when their perspectives were no longer prioritized, they became less important and valued within the family. This led to the emotions of sadness, loneliness and emotional silence, as they typically did not express their grievance openly. For many elderly men, declining in authority was not just a practical change but also a threat to their sense and identity of masculinity.

“Earlier, my words held importance in the house but now my children don’t listen to me as they used to listen before. It makes me sad, stressed, and I feel that my role has changed” (Participant 7, Age 67, Factory Employee)

Moreover, the changes within family relationships reconfigured participants’ positions within the household. Some participants expressed the idea that their influence got lessened because of changing circumstances, such as children becoming more independent and the addition

of new family members. This led to a sense of being left out and to a decrease in decision making power.

“When my son got married, I felt that with the addition of a new family member, especially my son’s wife, my authority and decision-making power in the family became weaker. Before, my son was under my control and he used to obey me; but after his marriage, he started arguing with me more often.” (Participant 8, Age 72, Business man)

According to the theory of Continuity Theory of Aging (Robert C. Atchley, 1989) this concept can be understood, which explains that older adults attempt to preserve their previous roles and identities even as circumstances change. In this instance, participants actively tried to maintain their sense of masculinity by maintaining their core values such as responsibility and respect, even when their ability to perform these roles diminished. Concurrently, this theory helps explain that the reduction in their social status, as their diminishing physical and financial contributions results to a perceived decrease in their value within both family and social relationships.

5.3 Economic and Physical Constraints in Fulfilling Masculinity

Participant’s responses clearly reflect that how their physical weakness and financial decline status limit their capability to fulfill traditional masculine roles. Their identity as a provider, which once described their sense of self, becomes important to sustain as aging affects them both in terms of health and income.

Many participants compared their present life with their previous life, with emphasis on the difference between past ability and current restrictions. When they were young, they saw themselves as strong, dominant, decision maker, independent and responsible as a provider role in

the family. With aging, physical decline and less financial capacity made them feel more dependent on others.

“Now I get tired. When I was young, I used to do a lot of work on the job but now I’m physically weak, which has an immensely negative impact on my finances too” (Participant 5, Age65, Attendant at Medical College)

This contrast speaks to a loss, not just of identity and ability but also financially as many participants were no longer able to work and support their families as they used to do previously. Having financial independence taken away had a negative effect on their self-confidence and their contribution within the family. For many, doing job and being a breadwinner was closely linked to masculinity, so this shift deeply impacted their self-worth.

Participants also reported specific physical disabilities, such as physical disability, loss of vision and problems like blood pressure, which negatively affected their daily life functioning as even easy tasks become difficult to manage and stop them from performing their traditional masculine roles of being provider, which they managed well and successfully in the past.

“Due to my blood pressure issue I’m not able to fulfill my financial responsibilities because when it rises, I get tense, and it becomes difficult for me to perform my duties as a breadwinner”
(Participant 6, Age 66, Van driver)

Likewise, a decrease in financial ability leads to a further drop their role in family. In many cases, participants felt that when they were no longer able to contribute financially, their perspectives were given less value. As financial dependency was closely associated with

masculinity, it led them created feelings of weakness and loss self-respect. This often made them feel less valued within both the family and society.

Surprisingly, at the same time, there were participants who tried to fight against the fall by staying active. Practices which includes doing exercise and maintaining routine were viewed as their strength. The stage was different for the participants who had relatively better financial positions and higher socio-economic stability experienced, as their affordability allowed them to preserve better health, access basic needs comfortably, and reduced dependence on their children. This decreased resilience had a positive impact on their mindset, making them feel more secure, respected and emotionally stable.

“At the age of 72 I am still mentally alert and active through the breathing and yoga exercises every day.” (Participant 15, Age 72, business man)

This response captures how some participants actively deny the negative impacts of aging by maintaining physical routines and a positive mindset. For them, masculinity was not only linked to physical strength but also to mental resilience, self-discipline and the ability to remain independent. Despite their physical disabilities due to old age, they maintained their dignity, their confidence and the control they had on their own lives through exercise and their daily lives.

5.4 Intersection of Minority Identity, Aging and Socioeconomic Status in Shaping Masculinity

The experiences of Christians who participated encompassed not only aging, but also experiences of religious based marginalization and social exclusion. Throughout their narratives they demonstrated that masculinity in old age is shaped not only by age but also by diminishing physical capability, making their experience more complex.

“As I am 66 years old now I get tired very quickly and I’m not able to earn and work actively as I am physically weak. I feel tired while driving” (Participant 6, Age 66, Van driver)

Participants describe discrimination primarily in the workplaces and in the public setting while interacting with others, where they often felt treated as second-class citizens because of their religious identity. Many participants reported that that they were offered limited employment opportunities, lower-paid jobs and were often limited to labor-intensive or low-status jobs irrespective of their abilities. Some participants also experienced disrespect within offices and public institutions, where their concerns were disregarded or delayed because they were Christians. In neighborhoods and social settings, they may have felt socially different from the majority community, with fewer opportunities for inclusion and equal treatment. This ongoing experience of exclusion impacted not only their position in society but also their confidence, dignity and sense of manhood, as respect and recognition were deeply linked to their understanding of manhood.

“At my workplace, I feel that I am treated differently because I am Christian. Even after working hard, I am not given the same respect or salary as others” (Participant 2, Age 65, factory employee)

These challenges became more difficult due to old age and physical weakness.

“At the NADRA office, my work was delayed because I am Christian. I felt they were not treating me the same as others. Being old and physically weak, it was very hard for me to manage everything on my own, and I felt helpless dealing with the situation”. (Participant 1, Age 67, Business man)

Loss of spousal further weakened their sense of authority. For many participants, their wife was an important source of emotional support, respect and stability within the household. After

the death of a spouse, they often felt more isolated and less emotionally secure, especially when family relationships became weaker and feelings of loneliness and dependency increased. This not only affected their emotional well-being but also reduced their sense of importance and control within the family.

“I feel less powerful, stressed and more alone in my home even after my wife passed away. She was my biggest support at home” (Participant 4, Age 70, Retired)

These findings can be understood through intersectionality Theory (Kimberle Crenshaw), which explains that how several identities including age, religion and socioeconomic status interact for creating overlapping disadvantages. In this context, participants’ experiences demonstrate that manhood in later life is shaped by these combined factors, making it a complex and evolving process.

5.5 Experiencing Pressure and Coping Mechanism

The responses of the participants reveal a strong feeling of internal strain that they face which emerged from the difference between what was expected and their declining capability to fulfill them. Even as they grew older, they still felt responsible for meeting the needs and wants of their families. This pressure further constructed by the combination of their age, financial status and religious identity which created emotional stress and uncertainty about their ability to effectively perform their roles.

This pressure was not always openly expressed by older adults it was deeply felt. Moreover, some participants mentioned that the stress from these pressures affect their health, which causes their blood pressure to rise and diabetes issues.

“I felt a lot of stress due to the responsibility of arranging my daughter’s marriage which caused me diabetes” (Participant 1, Age 67, Factory Employee)

Rather than expressing their struggles openly, participants adopted coping strategies that were mainly internal and silent. These strategies were used to avoid conflict, reduce tension and maintain peace within the household. For many, fear was a major factor in constructing such behavior.

“I stay quiet and don’t get involved in matters because I fear that if I impose my decisions, my son may kick me out of house. So, I surrender myself and accept whatever he says because I don’t want to lose my son” (Participant 13, Age 70, Business man)

This reflects the impact of familial power that how older men express their emotions and negotiate their roles.

Along with this, silence was also a predominant coping mechanism, along with religious coping. Participants often started doing prayer and turned to faith, which provided them with emotional support, sense of inner peace, and a sense of being heard during difficult moments.

“Whenever I get tense and feel like there is no one around to listen and support me I do pray to God. Prayer is my weapon.” (Participant 11, Age 68, Factory Employee)

This assisted them in coping with the sensation of stress, impuissance, and a loss of control due to aging. Moreover, some participants opt avoidance strategies, such as avoiding conflictual situations, while others altered their expectations and accepted changing family roles.

These coping strategies helped them keep emotionally stable and cope the challenges of aging while maintaining their sense of dignity.

This emphasizes that coping is not only psychological phenomenon but also spiritual. In the light of Disengagement Theory these ways of withdrawal and internal coping can be understood which says that individual's takes less part in involvement in stressful social interactions as they age. In this case, disengagement is not merely passive; rather, it is a conscious effort to maintain harmony and avoid further conflict and tension within the family.

5.6 Support Needs for sustaining Wellbeing

The need for support was identified as a serious issue because, as participant reported about the challenges surrounding aging, declines in authority and power and changes in status terms with lots of implications such as dignity. Support was seen as a necessity, not for luxury, especially in a stage of life where independence reduce and dependence inevitably grows.

Respondents reported that receiving emotional support from family members, especially from children. In contrast, attributes such as respect, care, attention, value among family members were considered extremely crucial for maintaining their self-respect.

“I want my children to respect my opinions as they used to respect me before. I want from my children to sit with me, listen to me, and spend some quality time with me” (Participant 14, Age 65, Factory Employee)

The participants further elaborated that support is not associated with resources but also giving importance and attention, value to their perspective, respect, cared and feeling of inclusion.

Moreover, participants appeal for assistance from government. They highlighted the necessity for both financial and institutional support. Financial security and health care were major concerns.

“I want government should give monetary aid to ensure my wellbeing”

(Participant 10, Age 68, Factory Employee)

Waning physical strength, disease, and regular medical checkup became widespread in old age, made health care service at low cost an important need for them. Participants opined that receiving free or low-cost medical care would lessen their both financial stress and emotional burden. Some also reported the necessity of equal treatment in public institution, pensions and job opportunities without discrimination based on religion. These support systems were seen as important not only for survival but also for preserving dignity, independence and a sense of belonging in later life.

5.7 Reflective Experiences of Participation

This theme shows that how the process of taking part in the research itself became meaningful for the participants. For many, the interview was not just a process of data collection but an opportunity to express their hidden thoughts, feelings and emotions and feel acknowledged. Participants described the experience in the form of catharsis, as it allowed them to express their emotions, their suppressed thoughts and feelings.

One of the participant stared crying while saying,

“I feel that I’m talking to my daughter and at least there is someone who asks about my feelings.

Now I’m old, how do I feel? What are my wishes?” (Participant 3, Age 68, Factory Employee)

Participants in this study became emotionally engaged as they were able to think deeply about their past experiences, changing family roles, personal losses and unfulfilled expectations. Some participants expressed that they had never previously reflected in how aging had affected

their identity as men. Through the conversation, they became more aware of their own struggles, strengths and emotional needs. This process gave them a sense of relief and personal validation.

The participants felt and describe that their voices were acknowledged and that their narratives mattered as a result of the research process which also gave them a sense of importance and dignity. They felt respected when they were heard, especially at a time when they often felt ignored or less valued within family and society. In this regard, participation itself became meaningful, not only for the purpose of research but also as an emotionally supportive and reflective experience for the participants.

The interview gave the participants an opportunity where individuals felt free to express and share their feelings without hesitating and getting worried of getting judgment from researcher, which was yet another important aspect of involvement. As society expects from males to be strong, many older men noticed that their feelings were often ignored and disregarded in their day-to-day lives. Particularly they described that people rarely question about their emotions, frustrations, or emotional suffering; instead they typically question about their health or financial demands. They were able to share openly regarding loneliness, shifting family dynamics, and the emotional difficulties of aging during the research discussion. Some participants reported that after retirement or physical weakness, they felt useless in the family and this created silent stress within them.

Chapter 6 Discussion, Conclusion, Limitation, Recommendation

The findings of this research emphasizes that how elderly Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan handle complex social, economic, authority and household challenges while maintain a sense of masculinity. Participants repeatedly explained masculinity as closely tied to responsibility, authority, power and a role as a family provider. These findings correspond with existing literature showing that masculinity in South Asia, especially in Pakistan, is structured around strength, control and the ability to provide for the family (Aurat Foundation, 2016; Kumar, 2025; Iftikhar, 2024). Participants acknowledged masculinity as a socially learned concept through family and cultural traditions, which aligns with the work of Roy (2023) and UNGEI (2025) about how masculine norms are transmitted through socialization.

These socially transmission of masculine norms corresponds with Hegemonic Theory (Connell, 1987), that refers to a dominant social structure established by men in position of power, authority and the capacity to provide, fulfill needs and to protect their family. Participants formative experiences demonstrated these hegemonic ideals as they adopted the expectations to be strong, dominant and a controlling personality. This framework describes the manner in which how men assess their identity and their roles, and the study portrays that these ideals continue to influence elderly men's self-identity, even while practical challenges make it difficult to act on them.

Physical and financial challenges appeared to be a significant limitation for participants. Weakening strength, health issues, low income affected their ability to fulfill the needs of home and the traditional masculine roles. This is consistent with prior studies on aging and masculine identity which emphasizes how retirement, physical weakening and financial instability challenge

men's self-concept and social roles (Thomas & Thurnell-Read, 2024; Lucea, 2017). Social discrimination which reduces possibilities in the job, increases these challenges. The findings highlight the concept of marginalized masculinity, where structural barriers restrict men's access to authority and power (UNHCR Emergency Handbook, 2025; Bontrager, 2022), highlighting the tension between culturally idealized masculinity and their lived realities.

In constructing male identity family dynamics played an essential role. While participant's authority decreased over time, many adopted advisory roles. This negotiation of traditional roles aligns with prior studies highlighting the importance of intergenerational relationships and support in maintaining elderly adults' well-being (Torabian, Maryam & Reza, 2022; Boyle, 2016).

Coping strategies described in the study illustrates both adaptation and resilience. Participants describe internal strategies, for instance, staying quiet to avoid tension and conflict with family, relying on prayer and maintaining daily routines to preserve health and dignity. These findings align with the literature on social support and coping among elderly adults, which shows the role of family, community and religion in alleviating emotional distress (Desmet, Dezzutter & Dillen, 2022; South & McDowell, 2018; Rekawati, Istifada & Sari, 2019).

In general, this study indicates that elderly Christian men in Sialkot, experience masculinity as a negotiated and relational identity constructed by social norms, minority status, economic realities and family relationships. While intersectional elements and real-world obstacles change how men can get and display these concepts, Hegemonic masculinity offers a cultural framework for ideals of power and authority.

6.1 Conclusion

This research concludes that masculinity among elderly Christian men in Sialkot is not fixed, but continuously form and redefined through the combined impacts of aging, social expectations and minority status within Pakistan. Although participants strongly linked masculinity with authority, responsibility and the position of provider within family, these ideals became challenging to uphold due to diminishing physical strength, scarce financial resources and reduced decision-making power within the household. These difficulties were further exacerbated by the prevalence of religious marginalization, thereby constraining social and economic opportunities.

Despite such constraints, however, the research indicates that the participants were able to renegotiated their sense of masculinity through a deliberate focus and adopting new tasks such as giving directions to their family members, maintaining their dignity and exercising patience and faith. Their coping mechanisms, consist of remaining silent to avoid conflict and tension within family, especially, among their children, relying on faith and adapting to shifting roles.

Financial stability, emotional care, and being treated with respect by families were identified as the main components in maintaining a quality life among older Christian men. Based on the experiences of participants, masculinity in old age is not only associated with physical strength or economic power, but also with emotional intelligence, social inclusion and capable of living with dignity. To get better and deeper understanding of aging and masculinity in Pakistan, this research brought attention to the voices of older minority men and highlights the importance for more inclusive social policies which take into consideration the needs of all communities.

The study extends an intersectional understanding of masculinity in a Pakistani minority context, and contributes greatly to gender and aging studies. This study also highlights the need for inclusive policies and support systems in areas such as social, economic and emotional needs of older minority men, ensuring their dignity, wellbeing and social inclusion.

Based on these results, it is essential to explore more about how the structural and cultural factors in Pakistani society contribute to the realities of aging Christian men. Aging is always a matter of inequality in the terms of social system of religion, social classes and those based on age. As men grow older, they do not face only biological aging but a loss of their positions associated with authority and recognition in the society. In such circumstances, identity is often re-constructed because of the lack of professional duties in community decisions. Therefore, this transition does not occur consistently for everyone because of individual experiences, familial ties, and the presence of social support systems. Whereas there are some participants who experience emotional abuse and dependence, that confuses their self-identity, others may get support from their relatives. Besides, even though they experience times of weakness, older men are still under pressure to appear strong and independence due to social ideals around masculinity. This difference creates an internal struggle between reality and social expectations, making aging a complex emotional process.

Furthermore, this research points to the significance of understanding the phenomenon of aging not as a biological stage of life but as a socially constructed process. Social meanings of masculinity tend to change over time and are continuously changing economic conditions, family structures and cultural expectations. In the case of older Christian men in Sialkot, these changes are strengthening by their minority status, which add another layer of vulnerability to their lived experiences. Despite these problems, however, it is possible to see how participants show agency

by reconstructing the concept of masculinity in old age. This reconceptualization moves beyond conventional ideas of dominance and control toward values such as emotional strength, moral responsibility and relational care. However, this transformation does not eliminate the emotional difficulties associated with aging, especially when men feel socially invisible or undervalued. The study therefore highlights the need for greater awareness at both community and policy levels to ensure that older minority men are not excluded from social protections systems, healthcare access, and emotional support networks. Addressing these gaps is essential for promoting dignity, inclusion, and well-being in later life.

Conclusion in sum, this study gives an in-depth explanation of the experience of masculinity, challenged and redefined by elderly Christian men in Sialkot, Pakistan. It emphasizes that masculinity does not consist of stable or static identity, but a fluid and context –dependent process shaped by aging, socioeconomic limitations, family dynamics, and religious minority status. At the beginning of the study masculinity was associated with characteristics such as strength, authority and being provider; however, their experiences led to a gradual shift as these traditional markers became difficult to maintain.

The significance of the study contributes to the larger field of gender and aging as it brings attention to a group that is often overlooked in academic literature. It also highlights the immediate necessity of creating social policies, stronger family-based care systems, and community-level support structures that recognize the emotional, social, and economic needs of aging minority men.

6.2 Limitations

Here are some of the study's limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

1. First of all, the study's focus has been limited to older Christian minority men in Sialkot, which might limit or restrict its relevance and generalizability to other minority groups or other parts of Pakistan.
2. Secondly, as this study is based on a qualitative approach with a limited sample size of 15 participants, the findings provide in-depth insights but lack in statistical generalizability.
3. Finally, considering Sialkot as the only geographical area under consideration, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of Christian men living in other areas of Pakistan where social, cultural and economic conditions may differ.

6.3 Recommendations

From the above findings of this study, various suggestions could be proposed to enhance the well-being and social inclusion of older Christian men in Sialkot and similar contexts in Pakistan.

The first one among the suggestions is that, there is a need for the formulation of inclusive social policies that particularly address the needs of older minority men, particularly in the context of financial support, health care access and social protection so that the impact of declining income and physical health can be reduced.

Secondly, community-level interventions should be developed to promote social inclusion and prevent discrimination towards religious minorities, to ensure equality in access to employment and social participation.

Thirdly, family intervention programs should be held and encouraged to promote respect, emotional support and inclusion of elderly men within family decision-making, as it plays a significant role in shaping their sense of masculinity and well-being. Moreover, religious and community institutions must also play a crucial role by providing safe environment and emotional support where older men can share openly their lived experiences and cope with challenges.

Lastly, future research could extend their focus from Sialkot to other minority groups and regions of Pakistan, by employing mixed methods approach that would offer both in-depth and generalizable findings. These initiatives can contribute to more comprehensive understanding of masculinity, aging and minority experiences in Pakistan.

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Appendix A Consent Letter

Respected Participant,

My name is Tirzah Sumbal, and I am conducting a research study for my thesis entitled “Aging and Marginalized Masculinity: Challenges of Older Christian Men in Sialkot, Pakistan.” This study is being conducted as part of my academic requirements.

The purpose of this research is to explore and understand the lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by older Christian men in maintaining and negotiating masculinity as aging individuals and as members of a religious minority in Pakistani society.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to take part in an in-depth interview. The interview will consist of questions related to your personal experiences, views, and perceptions regarding masculinity, aging, and minority status. The interview is expected to last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and will be conducted at a time and place convenient for you. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any point without any penalty or negative consequences. There are no known risks associated with participating in this research. All information shared during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Your name or any identifying information will not be disclosed in the research report. The data collected will be used only for academic purposes, including the completion of this thesis.

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. Participant Consent Statement I have read the above information, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sincerely,

Tirzah Sumbal

محترم شریک تحقیق،

میرا نام تیرضاه سنمبل ہے، اور میں اپنے تھیسس کے لیے ایک تحقیقی مطالعہ کر رہی ہوں جس کا عنوان ہے "عمر رسیدگی اور حاشیے پر موجود روایتی مردانا کردار: سیالکوٹ، پاکستان میں معمر مسیحی مردوں کو درپیش مشکلات" یہ تحقیق میری تعلیمی ضروریات کی تکمیل کے لیے کی جا رہی ہے۔

اس تحقیق کا مقصد پاکستانی معاشرے میں معمر مسیحی مردوں کے ان ذاتی تجربات، خیالات اور مسائل کو سمجھنا ہے جو وہ عمر رسیدہ فرد اور ایک مذہبی اقلیت کے رکن ہونے کے ناتے روایتی مردانا کردار کو برقرار رکھنے اور اس کی تشکیل کے دوران محسوس کرتے ہیں۔

اگر آپ اس تحقیق میں شرکت پر رضامند ہوں، تو آپ کو ایک تفصیلی انٹرویو میں شامل کیا جائے گا۔ اس انٹرویو میں آپ سوالات شامل ہوں گے، خصوصاً روایتی مردانا کردار، کی ذاتی زندگی کے تجربات، خیالات اور آراء سے متعلق عمر رسیدگی اور اقلیتی حیثیت کے موضوعات کے حوالے سے یہ انٹرویو تقریباً 60 سے 45 منٹ پر مشتمل ہوگا اور آپ کی سہولت کے مطابق وقت اور جگہ پر منعقد کیا جائے گا۔

اس تحقیق میں آپ کی شرکت مکمل طور پر رضاکارانہ ہے۔ آپ کو یہ حق حاصل ہے کہ آپ کسی بھی سوال کا جواب دینے سے انکار کر سکتے ہیں یا کسی بھی وقت بغیر کسی منفی نتائج کے تحقیق سے دستبردار ہو سکتے ہیں۔ اس تحقیق میں شرکت سے کوئی معلوم خطرہ وابستہ نہیں ہے۔

انٹرویو کے دوران فراہم کی گئی تمام معلومات کو مکمل طور پر خفیہ رکھا جائے گا۔ آپ کا نام یا کوئی بھی شناخت ظاہر کرنے والی معلومات تحقیقی رپورٹ میں شامل نہیں کی جائیں گی۔ جمع کیا گیا تمام ڈیٹا صرف تعلیمی مقاصد کے لیے، بشمول اس تھیسس کی تکمیل، استعمال کیا جائے گا۔

ذیل میں دستخط کر کے آپ اس بات کی تصدیق کرتے ہیں کہ آپ نے اوپر دی گئی تمام معلومات پڑھ لی ہیں، انہیں سمجھ لیا ہے، اور اپنی رضامندی سے اس تحقیقی مطالعے میں شرکت کر رہے ہیں۔

شرکت کی رضامندی کا بیان

میں نے مندرجہ بالا معلومات پڑھ لی ہیں اور اپنی مرضی سے اس تحقیقی مطالعے میں شرکت پر رضامند ہوں۔

دستخط: _____

تاریخ: _____

خیر اندیش،

تیرضاه سنمبل

Appendix B Interview Guide for Participants

Demographic information of Participants

Age, Education, Occupation, Residential Area, Marital Status etc.

Interview Guide:

How would you describe what it means to be a “man” in your community?

What qualities or roles do you think define a “real” or “ideal” man in our society?

From where you got this perception that these qualities a man should have to be an ideal?

What does be a man mean to you, especially now that you are older?

Over the years, many men say their views about what it means to be a man or to fulfill their responsibilities change with time. Would you say your own understanding or experience of being a man has changed as you’ve grown older? If yes, in what ways?

Do you feel you can still fulfill the roles you were expected to play as a younger man (e.g., provider, decision-maker)? Why or why not?

Q. Was it easy to give your authority?

How has your role in your family or community changed with age?

What do you think are the expectations placed on older men regarding their behavior or responsibilities?

Do you feel pressure while fulfilling the expectations? If yes, how do you handle the pressure

Have you experienced any changes in how others treat or view you since you’ve gotten older?

Is there any change in how society treats you as now you are older?

In what ways have aging or retirement affected your financial or social status?

Is there any changes in your social interaction as now you are old?

Do you feel less powerful or respected in home and society now compared to when you were younger? Please explain.

What Physical or health limitations or challenges you face to carry out traditional male responsibilities?

How do you cope with physical or health limitations that may affect your ability to carry out traditional male responsibilities?

As a minority man, what challenges have you faced in your community or society?

Do you think being a religious minority has affected your opportunities or social respect?

How?

Do you feel that your experience of aging is different because you belong to a minority group?

Have you ever felt more vulnerable or excluded as both an older person and a Christian man?

Can you share an experience?

What kind of support social, financial, emotional, do you think older Christian men need to live with dignity?

What support you want from your family?

What support you want from government?

How did you feel after this interview? Tell your experience