



## THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY INSTITUTION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN POPULATION LONGEVITY

Abdiraimova Shaxnoza

Independent Researcher at the Family and Gender Research Institute,  
Uzbekistan

### ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of the family institution and social support in population longevity. Longevity is interpreted not only as a medical and biological phenomenon, but also as a social result connected with family relations, emotional support, intergenerational solidarity, lifestyle, social protection, and community participation. The study emphasizes that family care and social support help older people maintain psychological stability, social inclusion, daily activity, and a sense of usefulness. In the context of Uzbekistan, the family and mahalla remain important social environments for elderly people, but migration, urbanization, and demographic change require the strengthening of formal support systems. The findings show that longevity is more sustainable when traditional family support is combined with accessible health care, social services, and community-based assistance.

**KEYWORDS:** Longevity, family institution, social support, elderly people, intergenerational solidarity, social protection, quality of life, healthy ageing.

### INTRODUCTION

Population longevity is one of the important indicators of social development, public health, and quality of life. In modern societies, the increase in life expectancy is connected with the development of medicine, improved living standards, better education, nutrition, and social protection. At the same time, longevity cannot be explained only by biological or medical factors. Social environment, family relations, emotional well-being, social activity, and support networks also play an essential role in maintaining health and life satisfaction in old age.

The world is experiencing rapid population ageing. The United Nations notes that the share of older people is increasing globally, and this process creates both social opportunities and challenges for national development systems. The World Health Organization also emphasizes that social connection is linked to better health and a lower risk of early mortality. Therefore, the study of the family institution and social support as factors of longevity is important for sociology, demography, social policy, and gerontology.

In Uzbek society, the family traditionally performs a central role in caring for elderly people. Respect for parents, intergenerational responsibility, co-residence with relatives, and support from children and grandchildren are important cultural norms. According to data on Uzbekistan's Active Ageing Index, almost 90% of older persons in Uzbekistan live in extended families, which shows the continued importance of family-based support in old age.

The study is based on theoretical and sociological analysis of scientific literature, international reports, and available data on ageing, social support, and family relations. The methodological basis includes the theory of social support, the life-course approach, and the concept of

intergenerational solidarity. These approaches make it possible to analyze longevity as a result of interaction between individual lifestyle, family environment, community institutions, and state social policy.

The study also applies comparative and interpretive methods. Comparative analysis helps to identify general international trends in ageing and the specific features of Uzbek society. Interpretive analysis allows the role of family values, mahalla relations, emotional support, and social assistance to be examined in the broader context of everyday life and cultural traditions. The results of the theoretical analysis show that the family institution performs several functions that support population longevity. First, the family provides emotional protection. Elderly people who receive attention, respect, and communication from relatives are more likely to feel socially needed and psychologically stable. Emotional support reduces loneliness, anxiety, and the feeling of uselessness, which are among the serious risks of ageing. The quality of family relations is therefore an important condition for healthy and meaningful old age.

Second, the family provides practical assistance in everyday life. In many households, elderly people receive help with nutrition, medical visits, household duties, financial needs, and personal care. This type of support is especially important for older people with chronic diseases, limited mobility, or dependence on others. Family support often works as the first and closest form of social protection before institutional assistance becomes necessary.

Third, the family contributes to the preservation of social roles. In Uzbek society, elderly people are often involved in family decision-making, upbringing of grandchildren, preservation of traditions, and moral guidance of younger generations. Such participation strengthens their sense of social usefulness. It also helps older people remain active members of the family and community, which positively influences psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Social support is not limited to the family. It includes support from neighbors, mahalla, public organizations, health institutions, and state social services. The mahalla environment is especially important in Uzbekistan because it connects family life with community solidarity. Through neighborly relations, moral assistance, and local support mechanisms, the mahalla can help reduce social isolation and strengthen care for vulnerable elderly people.

International research confirms that social relationships are strongly connected with survival and health outcomes. A meta-analytic review by Holt-Lunstad and colleagues showed that the quality and quantity of social relationships are associated with morbidity and mortality risks. This means that social support should be considered not as an additional factor, but as one of the essential conditions of longevity.

However, modern social changes create new challenges. Labor migration may reduce daily contact between elderly parents and adult children. Urbanization can weaken traditional neighborhood relations. Smaller family size and economic difficulties may reduce the ability of families to provide constant care. As a result, some elderly people may face loneliness, dependence, and insufficient assistance even in societies where respect for older people remains a strong cultural value.

For this reason, the family institution should be supported by formal social mechanisms. Health care, pensions, home-based care, psychological services, social work, and community programs are necessary to strengthen the positive influence of family support. Longevity becomes more sustainable when informal family care and formal social support complement each other.

The family institution and social support play an important role in population longevity. Family relations provide emotional stability, practical assistance, social inclusion, and intergenerational continuity. Social support from the mahalla, health services, and state institutions strengthens the ability of older people to remain active, protected, and integrated into society.

The study concludes that longevity should be understood as a complex social phenomenon shaped by family values, social relations, lifestyle, health care, and public policy. In Uzbek society, the family remains a key source of support for older people, but contemporary demographic and socio-economic changes require the modernization of social protection mechanisms. Future research should focus on empirical study of how family structure, living arrangements, gender, income, migration, and mahalla participation influence healthy ageing and life satisfaction among elderly people.

### References

1. Всемирная организация здравоохранения. Ageing and health [Электронный ресурс]. Geneva: WHO, 2025.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Social Report 2023: Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World. New York: United Nations, 2023.
3. Holt-Lunstad J., Smith T. B., Layton J. B. Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review // PLoS Medicine. 2010. Vol. 7. No. 7.
4. Exploring Uzbekistan's Active Ageing Index. Tashkent, 2024.
5. Bengtson V. L., Roberts R. E. L. Intergenerational solidarity in aging families: An example of formal theory construction // Journal of Marriage and the Family. 1991. Vol. 53. No. 4. P. 856-870.
6. World Health Organization. World report on ageing and health. Geneva: WHO, 2015. 260 p.