

A Study of Elderly Living in Old Age Homes in Manipur, India

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ABSTRACT

Old age was never seen as a problem in India. But recently ageing issues have begun to emerge as a case of social concern. Demographic, socio-economic and structural challenges are also taking place within the family institutes. India is now facing a unique situation in providing care for the elderly section and old age homes is one of alternate care facilities. Thus studying elderly in old age homes has become a significant area of social research. The study examined the socioeconomic profile of elderly who are living in four old age homes in Manipur, India. It also probes into the factors that have compelled the elderly to stay in these institutions. The present paper is based on the study conducted in different old age homes of Manipur by taking a sample of 69 institutionalized elderly. The study revealed that most of the elderly in the old age homes were from rural background, illiterate, widowed and are economically dependent on others with female residents far more the males. The most common reasons for shifting to old age homes were verbal abuse of daughter in law, financial constraints, verbal abuse of son, nobody to look after, physical abuse, tarnishing self-respect, health issues and many more. Majority of the respondents are satisfied with the facilities provided by the institute.

Keywords: Elderly; Old age homes; Longevity

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant demographic changes of the time is the rapidly growing number of elderly in the world population. This is the result of 'longevity' which is biggest achievement of the century. Major improvements in the field of nutrition, sanitation, medicine, health care, education, knowledge and economic wellbeing have made it possible for people to live longer. The growing elderly segment of the population will likely introduce new societal challenges for providing this group with healthcare, financial assistance and social as well as emotional support. These upcoming changes have forced the contemporary planners, researchers and policy makers to think over these issues. All these concerns are reflected in the national policy for elderly that have made various provisions for extension of support for the institutionalized elderly care apart from the participation of the voluntary and community sectors. Recognizing the importance of this particular age group, in 1990, the UN General Assembly designated 1st October as the International Day of older persons for celebrating and acknowledging the contribution of the elderly people to the society. The UN then declared the year 1999 as the International Year for older persons.

The Indian elderly population is currently the second largest in the world after China. Although old age homes started functioning from the second half of the 19th Century, the growth and

development of these facilities in India is still inadequate. Studies have shown that there has been tremendous growth in old age homes in India accommodating a sizable number of the elderly. In fact, the Government of India's National Old Age Policy (NOAP) demands that old age homes be established in every district in India as a welfare measures. Old age homes have become the best alternative for those who are poor, destitute and disabled. The need for old age homes has also risen in modern times. The very reason for the rapidly increasing of old age homes indicates in many ways the degree of neglect of the elderly in their own family by their near and dear ones. It is vital that the old age home should provide the inmates a cozy and comfortable place where they could spend the rest of their lives in peace, dignity and ease. In the old age homes, the inmates get all the basic facilities for a routine living, like food, clothing and shelter. All these necessities are looked after, but the much needed love and care of the loved ones will be missed in most of the cases in the old age homes.

Objectives of the study

- To study the socio-demographic profiles of the elderly staying in the old age homes.
- To explore the reasons for shifting in the old age homes.
- To know the perceptions and suggestions of the elderly regarding the availability of facilities in the old age homes.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper are drawn from an empirical study conducted on some institutionalized elderly in Manipur. The data was collected from 69 inmates staying in four old age homes of Manipur. Few studies have been conducted to document the situation of those elderly who are residing in old age homes.

Kumar et al. conducted their study in two selected old age homes of Uttar Pradesh with the objective of knowing the reasons for the elderly shifting in old age homes. They found out the major reasons to be loneliness, having no son, settlement of children abroad, misbehaviors of sons and daughters in law, life threats from children, adjustment problems etc. They considered that in the present scenario, old age homes are better alternative to reside and as such there is a need to generate emotional support facilities in the old age homes and the government as well as other voluntary agencies must make better arrangements for institutional support and care for the elderly [1].

Bansod and Paswan conducted a study in Amravati district of Maharashtra and found that most of the elderly residing in the old age home was from the rural background, illiterate, widowed and were economically dependent. It was found that many of the elderly left their home due to neglect by their adult children and relatives and nobody to look after them. Nearly 50 percent of the inmates felt that staying in old age home was far more peaceful and homely than staying at their own homes [2].

Hoe et al. conducted a study in Malaysia to explore an understanding elderly people perspective on factors leading to their admission into old age homes. Findings revealed that elderly people perceived their admission due to societal changes and modernization in lifestyle and mindset, their poor health and reduced mobility and changing family structure. They do not harbor feelings of anger and abandonment on their family's decision. They realized that the best option for them is to be admitted into OAHs where they can be cared for by full time trained personnel. The overall findings revealed that the elderly are satisfied with their lives living apart from their own family and assisted by caregivers in OAHs [3].

Kumar et al. in their study found the older adults living in old age homes face problems of adjustment with tight and rigid schedules; total or near-total separation from their family, friends and society; anxiety over entrusting oneself to a new environment; diminished physical ability and close and frequent encounters with death and ailments in the institution. For many of them social support is almost absent and this leaves older adults with the feeling that he or she does not belong, is not loved or cared for, esteemed or valued [4].

Showkat highlights the need for establishment of old age homes in the present day by conducting a sociological study in Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir. He stated that modernization has been a major cause for diminishing traditional values. In the modern society elderly were not well looked after and cared for, which leads them in a state of complete loneliness. He also gave a different account of elderly from high income and those in middle or lower income groups. The elderly belonging to upper income group need old age homes as living in old age homes will help them to interact with the people of their genre. Majority of elderly from middle and lower income groups were pushed to stay in old age homes because of financial factors. In this way, he highlighted

the need for establishment of old age homes and day care centre in Kashmiri society. Old age home will not only serve the need of proper care but is a way to entertain, share and make the life of the elderly happy in a healthy environment [5].

Dhommaraju wrote on the perspectives of ageing in India. He showed concern on the increase in elderly population of India which is projected to increase to about 300 million by 2050. Families, the traditional source of support for the elderly in India, are getting smaller as result of reduction in fertility and, in rural areas, due to migration. Changing norms and attitudes on intergenerational relations have the potential to weaken traditional social and family support structures that the elderly depend on. As institutional and welfare support systems are lacking in India, changes to the family and social support structures will have serious implications for ageing in India. The perspectives presented also raise important questions about the relationships, roles and responsibilities of individuals, families and the state [6].

Prasad et al., tried to document different aspects of deprivation in the old age by taking up economic, health and social aspects of deprivation and how it varies across space and gender. He talks of deprivation as a much broader term than poverty and it includes all kinds of denial or being excluded from a minimum standard of living. The process of ageing is always accompanied by a decline in the wellbeing that results in rising economic, health as well as social insecurity among the aged. He also cited the existence of disparity across states, sex and sector in different cases of deprivation. Women are found to be more disadvantaged as compared to their male counterparts in the old age. The relative advantage is also found to be higher in case of urban areas in comparison to the rural areas [7].

RESULTS

To study the life of elderly in old age homes, it is essential to study their socio-economic background

Majority of the respondents are females (75.36%) and hailed from rural areas (66.66%). Regarding age distribution, more than half of the respondents (52.17%) are aged between 70-79 years and majority (69.56%) of them belongs to OBC category. Majority of them (76.81%) are widowed, follows Hindu Religion (66.66%), 55.07% of them are illiterate. 68.11% of them came from nuclear family and earlier doing business, followed by agriculture (Table 1).

The first choice of the elderly is always to stay with their families. But sometimes many factors forced them to leave their near and dear ones and join old age homes as the last resort. The factors which compelled the Old age homes residents for residing in old age homes are provided in Table 2. The most common reasons were verbal abuse of daughter in law (42.02%) and financial constraints (14.49%). Other factors were verbal abuse of son (10.14%), nobody to look after (8.69%), physical abuse (7.24%), tarnishing self-respect, health issues and many more. Some of the respondents refused to give any response regarding familial relation and this clearly indicates the pain they felt.

Elderly in old age homes have a lot of free time. So engaging in something is quite necessary to divert their mind from their sad past. An effort has been made to study the leisure time activity of elderly in the old age homes. Table 3 illustrates that one third

Table 1: Brief socio-economic profile of the respondents.

Sex	No. of respondents	Percentage
Male	17	24.63
Females	52	75.36
Total	69	100
Age (in years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
60-69	27	39.13
70-79	36	52.17
80+	6	8.69
Total	69	100
Area	No. of respondents	Percentage
Rural	46	66.66
Urban	23	33.33
Total	69	100
Community	No. of respondents	Percentage
Meitei	63	91.2
Tribal	4	5.79
Others	2	2.89
Total	69	100
Religion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Hindu	46	66.66
Meitei	18	26.08
Christian	5	7.24
Total	69	100
Caste	No. of respondents	Percentage
General	2	2.89
OBC	48	69.56
ST	4	5.79
SC	15	21.73
Total	69	100
Education	No. of respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	38	55.07
Primary	9	13.04
Middle	12	17.39
Matric	8	11.59
Secondary	1	1.44
Graduation and above	1	1.44
Total	69	100
Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage
Unmarried	7	10.14
Married	5	7.24
Divorced/Separated	4	5.79
Widow/Widower	53	76.81
Total	69	100
Past Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
Government Job	2	2.89
Private Job	11	11.94
Petty jobs	9	14.04
Business	26	37.68
Agriculture	16	23.18
Not applicable	5	7.24
Total	69	100
Family Type	No. of respondents	Percentage

Nuclear family	47	68.11
Joint Family	22	31.88
Total	69	100

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by factors which force them to shift in OAH.

Incident	No of respondents	Percentage
Tarnishing self-respect	3	4.34
Verbal abuse of son	7	10.14
Verbal abuse of daughter in law	29	42.02
Physical abuse	5	7.24
Financial constraints	10	14.49
Health problem	3	4.34
Nobody to look after	6	8.69
Any other	6	8.69
Total	69	100

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their leisure time activities.

Leisure time activities	No. of respondents	Percentage
Watching television	12	17.39
Listening radio	23	33.33
Reading	2	2.89
Talking with inmates	12	17.39
Playing indoor games		
Gardening	9	13.04
Other useful activities for the institute	11	15.94
Total	69	100

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their views about the facilities provided in the old age homes.

Facilities	Fully Satisfied	Satisfied to some extent	Fully Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied to some extent
Basic facilities	11	43	0	15
Medical facilities	14	36	3	16
Recreational Facilities	25	30	0	14

Table 5: Suggestions made by the respondents.

Suggestions	No. of respondents	Percentage
No need of any improvements	31	44.92
Need more staffs/caregivers for elders personal care	9	13.04
Need better medical care	10	14.49
Need more facilities	15	27.73
Allowed to go outside	4	5.79
Total	69	100

of the respondents listen radio in their free time and the radio programs includes news and entertainment programs like songs, dramas etc. 17.39% of the respondents spend their leisure time by watching television. A same percentage (17.29%) of the respondents spend their leisure time by talking and interacting with their fellow inmates. 15.94% of the respondents engaged in performing some useful activities of the old age home like sweeping, group activities etc. 13.04% of the respondents loves gardening and maintain the gardens in the premises of the institution. A very meager percentage (2.89%) of the residents is engaged in reading.

Old age homes are expected to provide a number of facilities to enhance the quality of life of the inmates. Facilities like basic

services of food clothing shelter, medical facilities and other recreational facilities are studied. All these facilities are provided in all the four old age homes but the level of their satisfaction is illustrated in Table 4.

The respondents were asked to give or express their suggestions regarding improvement of working condition of the old age homes. Most of the respondents (44.92%) when asked how to improve the institutional facilities, stated that there is no room for improvements. Further 27.73% of the respondents made suggestions regarding the need for more facilities like provision for a resident doctor in the institute; providing of pocket money etc. 14.49% of the respondents want a better medical care facilities,

13.04% of the respondents reported that more staffs or caregivers are needed and 5.77% of the respondents want the institution to allow them to go outside freely (Table 5).

In a nutshell, majority of the inmates did not give any suggestions as the old age homes are freely providing the facilities and hence not demanding and vocal regarding their preferences.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study revealed that most of the elderly in the old age homes were from rural background, illiterate, widowed and are economically dependent on others. The female residents were more in number. The findings revealed that the factors that compelled them to join old age homes are verbal abuse of daughter in law, financial constraints, verbal abuse of son, nobody to look after, physical abuse, tarnishing self-respect, health issues etc. Majority of the elderly blamed their daughter in laws for their present condition. Most of the elderly were satisfied with the facilities provided in the institute and many more expressed their view that when everything is provided for free when even their own family doesn't, there is nothing to complain about.

Old age is the age when humans feel more in need of care and someone to interact and share feelings with. But what the elderly in the present generation are facing is just the opposite. Due to various factors, the number of elderly in old age homes are increasing day by day. The number of old age homes is also constantly increasing and also many of the old parents are now deciding to live in old age homes rather than living with their children as they faced many problems like lack of care, emotional support and economic support from the family. It is vital that the old age home should

provide the inmates a cozy and comfortable place where they, the inmates get all the basic facilities for a routine living, like food, clothing, shelter, proper medical care, recreational facilities etc. To create normal life of these elderly with proper care and protection is indeed very essential.

LIMITATIONS

The study was carried out in a limited time period on a small sample of old ages homes and thus may not be generalized to a great extent.

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