

Socio-Cultural Facts of old age People – A Sociological Study

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Abstract

In India, around 2/3rd of the population is below or close to 30, so does talking about old age problems (which exist) sound awkward?. Consider this, out of every 10 elderly couples in India, more than 6 are forced by their children to leave their homes. With no place to go and all hopes last, the elderly have to resort to old age homes, which do not guarantee first class treatment. In India, unlike USA, parents do not leave their children on their own after they turn 18 (of course there are exceptions), but children find it hard to accept the fact that there are times when parents want to feel the love that they once shared with them. There are times when parents just want to relax and want their children to reciprocate their care. Every parent wants to see their child grow and be successful but no parent wants their child to treat them like an unnecessary load on their responsibilities.

Every other day, we see news of parents being beaten up by their children, parents and in-laws being forced to do the household chores, being made to live in small dungeon-like rooms, their property being forcefully taken over by over ambitious children.

There are 81million older people in India-11 lakh in Delhi itself. According to an estimate, nearly 40% of senior citizens living with their families are reportedly facing abuse of one kind or another, but only 1 in 6 cases actually comes to light. Although the President has given her assent to the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act which punishes children who abandon parents with a prison term of three months or a fine, situation is grim for elderly people in India. According to NGOs incidences of elderly couples being forced to sell their houses are very high. Some elderly people have also complained that in case of a property dispute they feel more helpless when their wives side with their children. Many of them suffer in silence as they fear humiliation or are too scared to speak up. According to them a phenomenon called 'grand dumping' is becoming common in urban areas these days as children are being increasingly intolerant of their parents' health problems. After a certain age health problems begin to crop up leading to losing control over one's body, even not recognizing own family owing to Alzheimer are common in old age. It is then children began to see their parents as burden. It is these parents who at times wander out of their homes or are thrown out. Some dump their old parents or grandparents in old-age homes and don't even come to visit them anymore.

Keywords: *Socio-culture, old age, sociology, characterization, upward mobility, neglects.*

Introduction

Metros have nearly 11 lakh senior citizens each but there are only 4 governments' run homes for them and 31 by NGOs, private agencies and charitable trusts. The facilities are lacking in government run homes.

Forget the rights that the elderly enjoy in India. Just forget about the action that they can take. Think on moral grounds. Why do we tend to forget that the reason we are in this world is our parents, the reason we studied is our parents, the reason we were alive all this while is our parents, the reason we survived all the diseases is our mother's care. The hands who made us walk is our parents'. When we were kids we never thought of it but we knew that no matter what, our parents will be by our side. But when our time came to show our respect, to reciprocate the love, to show our gratitude, we back out.

But the truth is that even when they are counting their last breath, they are still thinking of us!.Is the youth too insensitive to the elder? Passing comments at an old man walking slowly on the road and disturbing the flow of the traffic are our ethics? Come on youth, stand up against such injustice.The elderly population in India is continuously increasing and also the problems faced by these people are increasing simultaneously. The number of people in old age homes is constantly increasing and also most of the parents are now deciding to live in old age homes rather than living with their children. Nowadays these people are facing the problems like lack of care, emotional support and economic support from the family etc. Our culture recognizes the status of the parents as that of God.The elderly population in India is continuously increasing and also the problems faced by these people are increasing simultaneously. The number of people in old age homes is constantly increasing and also most of the parents are now deciding to live in old age homes rather than living with their children. Nowadays these people are facing the problems like lack of care, emotional support and economic support from the family etc. Our culture recognizes the status of the parents as that of God.

It has been said that “we start dying the day we are born”. The aging process is synonymous with failing health. While death in young people in countries such as India is mainly due to infectious diseases, older people are mostly vulnerable to non-communicable diseases. Failing health due to advancing age is complicated by non-availability to good quality, age-sensitive, health care for a large proportion of older persons in the country. In addition, poor accessibility and reach, lack of information and knowledge and/or high costs of disease management make reasonable elder care beyond the reach of older persons, especially those who are poor and disadvantaged. To address the issue of failing health, it is of prime importance that good quality health care be made available and accessible to the elderly in an age-sensitive manner.

Objective:

Target of this paper is to query sociological and cultural being of old age population. The study also provides the outline of their problems.

Backdrop age old problem!

Health services should address preventive measures keeping in mind the diseases that affect – or are likely to affect – the communities in a particular geographical region. In addition, effective care and support is required for those elderly suffering from various diseases through primary, secondary and tertiary health care systems. The cost (to the affected elderly individual or family) of health has to be addressed so that no person is denied necessary health care for financial reasons. Rehabilitation, community or home based disability support and end-of-life care should also be provided where needed, in a holistic manner, to effectively address the issue to failing health among the elderly. Economic insecurity

Economic security is as relevant for the elderly as it is for those of any other age group. Those who are unable to generate an adequate income should be facilitated to do so. As far as possible, elderly who are capable, should be encouraged, and if necessary, supported to be engaged in some economically productive manner. Others who are incapable of supporting themselves should be provided with partial or full social welfare grants that at least provide for their basic needs. Families and communities may be encouraged to support the elderly living with them through counseling and local self-governance.

Neglect

The elderly, especially those who are weak and/or dependent, require physical, mental and emotional care and support. When this is not provided, they suffer from neglect, a problem that occurs when a person is left uncared for and that is often linked with isolation. Changing lifestyles and values, demanding jobs, distractions such as television, a shift to nuclear family structures and redefined priorities have led to increased neglect of the elderly by families and communities. This is worsened as the elderly are less likely to demand attention than those of other age groups. The best way to address neglect of the elderly is to counsel families, sensitise community leaders and address the issue at all levels in different forums, including the print and audio-visual media. Schools and work places offer opportunities where younger generations can be addressed in groups. Government and non-government agencies need to take this issue up seriously at all these levels. In extreme situations, legal action and rehabilitation may be required to reduce or prevent the serious consequences of the problem

Isolation

Isolation, or a deep sense of loneliness, is a common complaint of many elderly is the feeling of being isolated. While there are a few who impose it on themselves, isolation is most often imposed purposefully or inadvertently by the families and/or communities where the elderly live. Isolation is a terrible feeling that, if not addressed, leads to tragic deterioration of the quality of life. It is important that the elderly feel included in the goings-on around them, both in the family as well as in society. Those involved in elder care, especially NGOs in the field, can play a significant role in facilitating this through counseling of the individual, of families, sensitization of community leaders and group awareness or group counseling sessions. Activities centered on older persons that involve their time and skills help to inculcate a feeling of inclusion. Some of these could also be directly useful for the families and the communities

Fear

Many older persons live in fear. Whether rational or irrational, this is a relevant problem face by the elderly that needs to be carefully and effectively addressed. Elderly who suffer from fear need to be reassured. Those for whom the fear is considered to be irrational need to be counseled and, if necessary, may be treated as per their needs. In the case of those with real or rational fear, the cause and its preventive measures needs to be identified followed by appropriate action where and when possible.

Current statistics related to the old age problem

- The elderly population (aged 60 years or above) account for 7.4% of total population in 2001. For males it was marginally lower at 7.1%, while for females it was 7.8%. Among states the proportion vary from around 4% in small states like Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya to more than 10.5% in Kerala.
- Both the share and size of elderly population is increasing over time. From 5.6% in 1961 it is projected to rise to 12.4% of population by the year 2026.
- The sex ratio among elderly people was as high as 1028 in 1951 but subsequently dropped to about 938 in 1971 and finally reached 972 in 2001.
- The life expectancy at birth during 2002-06 was 64.2 for females as against 62.6 years for males. At age 60 average remaining length of life was found to be about 18 years (16.7 for males, 18.9 for females) and that at age 70 was less than 12 years (10.9 for males and 12.4 for females).
- There is sharp rise in age-specific death rate with age from 20 (per thousand) for persons in age group 60-64 years to 80 among those aged 75- 79 years and 200 for persons aged more than 85 years.
- The old-age dependency ratio climbed from 10.9% in 1961 to 13.1% in 2001 for India as a whole. For females and males the value of the ratio was 13.8% and 12.5% in 2001.
- About 65 per cent of the aged had to depend on others for their day-to-day maintenance. Less than 20% of elderly women but majority of elderly men were economically independent.
- Among economically dependent elderly men 6-7% were financially supported by their spouses, almost 85% by their own children, 2% by grand children and 6% by others. Of elderly women, less than 20% depended on their spouses, more than 70% on their children, 3% on grand children and 6% or more on others including the non-relations. Situation Analysis of The Elderly in India, 2011
- Of the economically independent men more than 90% as against 65 % of women were reported to have one or more dependants.

- Among the rural elderly persons almost 50% had a monthly per capita expenditure level between Rs. 420 to Rs. 775 and among the urban elderly persons, almost half of aged had monthly per capita expenditure between Rs. 665 and 1500 in 2002.
- Nearly 40% of persons aged 60 years and above (60% of men and 19% of women) were working. In rural areas 66% of elderly men and above 23% of aged women were still participating in economic activity, while in urban areas only 39% of elderly men and about 7% of elderly women were economically active.
- Even in 2007-08 only 50% men and 20% of women aged 60 years or more were literate through formal schooling.
- In rural areas 55 % of the aged with sickness and 77 % of those without sickness felt that they were in a good or fair condition of health. In urban areas the respective proportions were 63 % and 78 %.
- The proportion of elderly men and women physically mobile decline from about 94% in the age-group 60 – 64 years to about 72% for men and 63 to 65% for women of age 80 or more.
- Prevalence of heart diseases among elderly population was much higher in urban areas than in rural parts.
- About 64 per thousand elderly persons in rural areas and 55 per thousand in urban areas suffer from one or more disabilities. Most common disability among the aged persons was loco motor disability as 3% of them suffer from it.
- In age-groups beyond 60 years, the percentage of elderly women married was markedly lower than the percentage of men married.
- More than 75% of elderly males and less than 40% of elderly females live with their spouse. Less than 20% of aged men and about half of the women live with their children.

Solution and remedial measure to solve old age problem

Administrative set-up

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, which is the nodal Ministry for this purpose focuses on policies and programmes for the Senior Citizens in close collaboration with State governments, Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society. The programmes aim at their welfare and maintenance, especially for indigent senior citizens, by supporting old age homes, day care centres, mobile medicare units, etc.

Relevant Constitutional Provisions

Article 41 of the Constitution provides that the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want. Further, Article 47 provides that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.

Conclusion

The International Day of Older Persons is celebrated every year on 1st October. On 1.10.2009, the Hon'ble Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment flagged off "Walkathon" at Rajpath, India Gate, to promote inter-generational bonding. More than 3000 senior citizens from across Delhi, NGOs working in the field of elderly issues, and school children from different schools participated. Help age India, New Delhi collaborated with the Ministry in organizing the event of the day.

Aged people are really like children in their old age. When they have enough strength they gave care for their children and when they grew they avoid their parents because of their neat less performance towards others. We should understand their needs and have obligation to care aged persons. It is not only our duty but also our need. They may have many problems in their life that because of their age. They cannot avoid these problems themselves but it is the problems of this stage of growth. So we should care our parents as our gifts and become a role model for others. It is the collection of good deeds in our lives. So be proud about our parents.

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