



Problems faced by the Senior Citizens in Jammu and Kashmir: A Study of District Bandipora

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KEYWORDS

Social Isolation, Senior Citizens, Sufferings, Health problems, Dependency

ABSTRACT

Every human being goes through the biological process of ageing. This process starts at birth and ends with death. Ageing is a lifelong process of growth and development that starts in childhood, continues through maturity, and finally comes to an end with a person's death. We are living in this busy world, and it is the duty of each and every young one to spend a little time with our elders: patient listening, loving talks, and careful attention can relieve many of their psychological problems. Traditionally, the care of old age people has been the duty of the family, but as it may new patterns have developed to change the family structure which has reduced the capacity of this foundation to fill in as the security net for the less privileged people. The development of the nuclear family has drastically altered the way people live. In the above context, a study was conducted to highlight the problems of the elderly people residing in the family as well as highlight their health issues in district Bandipora. The sample of elderly men and women was selected using the "Purposive sampling" technique. The data was collected by using the Interview schedule and observation technique through a household survey and above 60 years of age was the criteria for sample selection. Results of the study revealed that elderly people are facing health, economic and psychological problems and they felt that the attitude of the younger generation is unsatisfactory towards them.

Introduction

Ageing is a series of processes that begin with life and continue throughout the life cycle. It represents the closing period in the lifespan, a time when the individual looks back on life, lives on past accomplishments and begins to finish off his life course. Adjusting to the changes that accompany old age requires that an individual is flexible and develops new coping skills to adapt to the changes that are common to this time in their lives (Warnick 1995). According to projections by the UN Population Division, there will be two elderly persons for every child in the world by 2050. This implies that the aged 60 and above population will account for 32% of the population by 2050. By 2050 about 80% of the elderly will be living in developing countries. Population ageing is occurring in parallel with rapid urbanization and in 2007 more than half of the world's population lived in cities. By 2030 that figure is expected to rise to more than 60% (UN 1998). As per the Census of India (2011) the aged population 60 years and above constitutes 8.6% to the total population of country. In Jammu and Kashmir, the elderly population has risen from 432 thousand in 1991 to 675 thousand in 2001. The proportion of the elderly has risen from 5.78% in 1991 to 6.71% in 2001 and 7.4 percent in 2011 (Census of India 2011). WHO categorizes old age into three age brackets as "Young aged" (60 to 69 years), "Middle aged" (70 to 79 years) & "Old aged" (80 years and above) (Figueria *et al.* 2008). In today's contemporary society

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ageing is the most emerging demographic phenomenon. Asia has the largest number of the world's elderly 53% followed by Europe 25% (Warr 2018).

The traditional Indian family structure was different from the present scenario. That time old people had respected positions in their families. But nowadays they are becoming inactive, dependent, sick and weak in terms of economically, physically and psychologically all these phenomena lead to several socio-economic problems (Amiri 2018). With the advent of industrialization, globalization and economic liberalization, the individuals are getting familiar with innovative and modern techniques and methods. The youth is occupied with enhancing their career opportunities, middle aged people are engaged in jobs and earning their livelihoods and the aged individuals are leading retired lives. They either get occupied in some kind of honorary work, or manage the household chores through obtaining assistance from the caregivers or they follow their daily routine (Kapur 2018). The major problems which oldest people face are lack of economic provisions, poor health conditions, lack of emotional support and illness in the post retirement period. This state of affairs becomes a socio-economic problem or issue as many people feel it is a problem. The problem of inadequate income after retirement, loss of spouse or ample free time, poor health, social isolation, were family relationship and physically and financially dependency etc. all these situations are interrelated or interdependence (Amiri 2018).

The individuals are gaining more mobility and joint family system is being disintegrated into the emergence of nuclear family system. The aged people are experiencing changes in their social lives. Youngsters believe in nuclear family structure and they don't like old people. They let to live them in old age homes. In some families old people with their own wish start to live in old age homes due to annoying behaviour of their children. The elderly Indian population is one of the fastest-growing in the world. At 110 million, India has the second-largest global population of ageing citizens. By 2050, that number will probably increase to 240 million. Yet, India lacks basic infrastructure and expertise to support the health & welfare of our elderly. According to multiple surveys across the country, for most Indian senior citizens, the biggest concerns are healthcare costs, lack of financial support and isolation. In addition, most of the aged are not accorded the dignity of care they deserve in later life. There is a little public or private financial support for the elderly. Research shows that of the 450 million Indians who are working, not more than 45 million are eligible for a pension. Senior Care Health Insurance has very low penetration and has an extremely poor pay-out history (Choudary and Raseed 2017). Yet, health costs keep rising in old age. Rapid socio-economic change, including more nuclear families, is also making elder care management difficult, especially for busy adult children responsible for their older parents' wellbeing. Managing Home Care for the elderly is a massive challenge as multiple service providers, who often do not talk to each other, are involved in providing that care -nursing agencies, physiotherapists, medical suppliers. Most of these providers are small, unorganized players who extend sub-optimal care quality. Most senior citizens who live alone suffer due to lack of companionship – sometimes exacerbated by lack of mobility due to ill health. Loneliness and isolation are major concerns among elderly Indians above the age of 60. Isolation can result in gradual depression and other mental disorders in the elderly (Singh and Misra 2009). The traditional sense of duty and obligation of the younger generation towards their older generation is being eroded. The older generation is caught between the decline in traditional values on one hand and the absence of adequate social security system on the other (Gormal 2003). The elderly citizens are in need of urgent attention. They do not need our pity, but the understanding love and care of their fellow human beings. It is our duty to see that they do not spend the twilight years of their life in isolation, pain and misery. Older persons are, therefore, in need of vital support that will keep important aspects of their lifestyles intact while improving their over-all quality of life (Dandekar 1993).

Profile of the study area

Jammu and Kashmir UT is divided into 22 districts. Kashmir and Jammu division consists of 10 districts each whereas Ladakh division consists of 2 districts. Bandipora district is one of the 22 districts of UT, Jammu and Kashmir with 385099 population (Census of India 2011), located on the banks of Wular Lake was chosen for the study. It is located approximately 40 kilometres northwest of Srinagar city (34°16o -34°25oN, 74°29oE-74°40oE) with an elevation of 1580 meters above sea level. Bandipora all along used to be a well-known town which almost served as a port in old times. It used to be one of the important places of the old kingdom known as Khuaihom.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in some selected areas of the Bandipora district during the period from December 2021 to March 2022, by using survey method and interview schedule. Around one hundred respondents (100) were interviewed during the survey through purposive sampling and respondents were taken from five villages namely Malangam, Aloosa, Ashtangoo, Kehnusa and Watlab and from each village 20 respondents were taken for the study. From the participants of the study informed consent was obtained. Interview schedule was adopted to collect information on various social issues faced by the elderly persons. The interview schedule was divided into four sections. The first section included questions regarding background information of the respondents. The second section included questions pertaining to problems faced by the elderly people and the perception of elderly people regarding care and treatment given by family members and other relatives. The third section includes questions regarding the perception of elderly people about causes of problems and negative attitude towards life and the last section includes questions regarding health issues of the elderly people. Prior to final data collection, the interview schedule was tested on 20 respondents and subsequently finalized, upon successful testing and minor modifications. After collection of data from the field, data were verified to eliminate errors and inconsistencies. Collected data were numerically tabulated and analysed through simple statistical methods in Microsoft Excel (version 2016).

Results of the study

The below section tries to highlight the background information as well as other problems of the elderly people. Elderly people living in families felt that it was a period of dependency because they were dependent upon their family for support and also felt economically insecure. In Kashmir, social and family life underwent quick and considerable upheaval. These quick changes have an impact on social structures, behaviour, and values. For instance, the family and kinship structures have evolved in terms of functioning, dividing a large family into nuclear families. In the society, the word elderly evokes an unhappy and lonely dependent individual with walking difficulties, close to changes and whose social relations have weakened. The ability to exist and participate in society as a whole is made possible by family. All types of assistance, which are a basic requirement of society, are first obtained from family. After family, friends, neighbours, and other types of relationships that exist in society can act as a stand-in for family or as a source of the benefits that family provides. All actors may congregate their resources and activities at a focal point created by interaction between individuals or social groups (Table 1).

As per the collected primary information, majority of the respondents were belonging to the age group of 65 to 70 years (42.0%). 28% respondents were belonging to the age group of 60 years to 65 years, 19% respondents were belonging to the age group of 70-75 years and only 11 per cent respondents were above 75 years of age. As per the selected sample 50% respondents were males and 50% respondents were females.

As per the educational status of the respondents majority of the respondents (29.0%) were illiterate and 18.0%, 26.0% and 12.0% of the respondents were having primary, middle and secondary level of education.

Higher secondary and graduation passed were only 9.0% and 6.0%. As per the above table majority of the respondents (52%) were living in nuclear families and the trend of joint family is declining day by day.

Table 2 reveals that 36% of respondents experience economic related problems. The economic problem arises when old age people are not able to sustain themselves financially. Therefore lose the financial independence because of increasing competition from young generation. Most elderly persons frequently lack the ability to be productive or enjoy opportunities as much as they once did. 9.0% of respondents report having psychological related problems. As per the growing age the mind-set of human being is always change. After retirement idleness is made to believe that they are not physically productive now. According to the data gathered, 10.0% of respondents face the pulsing or accommodation related problems. According to these respondents the present accommodation is not suitable, sufficient as per the current requirements. 24% of respondents faced the health-related problems. As people get older, their metabolisms slow down and they start to lose their strength physically and psychologically. They are more prone to sickness, diseases etc. As a result, individuals have poorer vision, less capacity to think clearly, trouble remembering things from the past, and are more susceptible to bone illnesses. 22% of respondents face the problem of the abuse or ill-treatment at the hands of family members.

Majority of the respondents (56%) stated that the treatment according to them by the family members and other relatives is not cordial (Table 3). They felt neglected in the family but the respondents kept themselves busy by taking up various household activities like looking after their grandchildren, doing small household chores etc. and also reported that they were humiliated by their daughters-in-law and their sons did not care for them. However, 21% of respondents said that their kids treated them with respect and provided them with comfort. They also received financial, social and emotional support from their children. 23% of respondents reported that they are getting normal treatment by their family members and other relatives

According to 32 per cent of respondents, generational conflict is the main reason for issues and a pessimistic outlook on life (Table 4). According to them they are unable to accept the new social values and standard of new generation. They claim that they are unable to embrace the new social standards and ideals of the younger generation. They experience generational conflicts with their children or grandchildren, which may ruin their interest in life. Poor health, in the perspective of 45 per cent of those surveyed, is the main reason why senior people have troubles. Many health issues that come with ageing, such as heart palpitations, knee discomfort, poor eye sight and poor hearing capacity, etc., make elderly individuals a burden on their families. According to 23 per cent of respondents, loneliness is the main factor contributing to the issues facing senior citizens. In Indian culture, marriage is considered as a main source of companionship. The spouse or companion is what a person needs to live. However, if one of the spouses passes away, it leaves the other partner with a void in their lives. The loss of a spouse has made an elderly person feel lonely.

According to the respondents' information, 14.0 per cent of them have cough and cold symptoms. The majority of respondents (24%) experience hip and knee discomfort, while 12.0 per cent experience vision loss. It demonstrates that knee discomfort and joint pain are substantially more common in the elderly. 9.0 percent of respondents had heart disease, 21.0 percent of respondents had hypertension, and 20.0 percent of respondents had diabetes. Elderly folks get ailments and health issues as they get older. They need regular medical check-ups, they are required to take their medicines and in case of other health problems are even required to undergo medical treatment. Medical and health care are regarded as areas that need finances. Some medical treatments are highly expensive, and patients must make financial commitments. When they are wealthy, they do not face any problems, on the other hand, when they are not financially strong, then they experience problems.

Conclusion

The position and status of the elderly have been compromised by changes in people's cultures, values, and general standard of life. Ageing is an inherent biological phenomenon. All around the world, the issue of old age has been recognised as a major social issue. People must deal with several socio-economic and health challenges as they age, which they are unable to resolve and which cause them to suffer. As a result, these issues become problematic for society. It is concluded that existence of nuclear family system, and the impact of economic and social transformation have focused on the peculiar problems which the old age people are facing nowadays, and the duties or obligations of young generation towards the old age people is being eroded. Many people think that ageing is a completely negative final segment of the human life span, but it is not so. Awareness and acceptance of the fact that ageing has physiological, psychological and social determinants would make the ageing process acceptable, cheerful perhaps even desirable by making living meaningful. The study found that the elderly people are not accorded the respect they deserve by their children nowadays that they used to receive. They begin to feel abandoned, which causes them to avoid social interaction and become lonely. Loneliness can then lead to stress and sadness, which can finally cause them to get ill.

Suggestions

National policies and programmes for the elderly should be implemented properly and effectively. The government should effectively implement the national programme for the health care of the elderly (NPHCE). In order to transform older people's negative attitudes toward life into positive ones and lessen their sense of dependence on their families, it is important to use their experiences and knowledge for the benefit of society.

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Tables

Table 1 - Background Information of the respondents

Variables	Categories	No. of Respondents (n)	Percentage(%)
Age (Years)	60-65	28	28.0
	65-70	42	42.0
	70-75	19	19.0
	Above 75	11	11.0
Gender	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
Education	Illiterate	29	29.0
	Primary	18	18.0
	Middle	26	26.0
	Secondary	12	12.0
	Higher secondary	09	9.0
	Graduation	06	6.0
Type of family	Joint	48	48.0
	Nuclear	52	52.0

Source: Field study

Table 2 - Major problems faced by the Elderly respondents

Status of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Economic	36	36.0
Psychological	09	9.0
Accommodation related	10	10.0
Health related	24	24.0
Elder abuse	21	21.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field study

Table 3 - Perception of elderly people regarding care and treatment given by family members and other relatives

Status of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Respectful treatment	21	21.0
Normal treatment	23	23.0
No cordial treatment	56	56.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field study

Table 4 - Perception of elderly people about causes of problems and negative attitude towards life

Status of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Generation gap conflict	32	32.0
Poor health condition	45	45.0
Loneliness	23	23.0
Total	100	100.0

*Source: Field study**Table 5 - Health issues found among elderly people*

Status of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Cough and Cold	14	14.0
Decreased eyesight	12	12.0
Hypertension	21	21.0
Joint and knee pain	24	24.0
Heart disease	09	9.0
Diabetes	20	20.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field study