

Problems faced by the Elderly in Rural Karnataka: A Study

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Abstract:

Aged people usually feel left behind and face a lot of problems and hardships, especially in some rural communities. They find it difficult to cope with many situations due to multiple factors. Their children migrate to urban areas and they experience psychological problems. They face a lot of problems such as health issues, financial issues, community support, isolation, social relationships and lack of availability of services for elderly persons. Their overall well-being is at risk in all aspects Physical, Psychological, Social and Economic. It is important to study the various factors to understand the situation of elderly people in rural Karnataka. This empirical paper focuses on the problems faced by elderly people and the status of their well being to better understand and recommend suggestions to address the issues of elderly persons in the rural areas of Karnataka.

Key Words: Elderly Person, Ageing, Well being, Psychological well being

Introduction

India has a higher population of elderly people with two-thirds living in rural areas and half of them living in poor conditions. A decline in fertility and mortality rates combined with an improvement in child survival rates and an increase in life expectancy are some of the reasons for an increase in the elderly population in India. Life expectancy has increased since India's independence. The experience of elderly people is changing in different aspects of their lives.

The decline in ageing means the changes that the individual experiences physically because of the poor functioning of their body that results in poor mobility, loss of vision, loss of hearing, inability to eat and digest food properly, poor memory power and several other chronic conditions. They face economic challenges due to unemployment and physical constraints leading to economic dependency on their children and relatives. A sense of low self-worth may be experienced because of the loss of their economic independence and social recognition. Parents who move along with their children to urban areas face adjustment issues like adapting to the modern lifestyle and they devalue modern cultures and beliefs. (Ingle & Nath, 2008)

Parents become such a burden on the children that they end up becoming victims of violent and cruel behaviour from their children. Most of the parents survive their old age with the fear of being mistreated by their children and have no choice but have to live at the mercy of their children as they are dependent on them both physically as well as financially. Crimes against elderly people are increasing day by day and most of the reasons for these crimes are either outrage over property issues or the burden of not wanting to take care of the parents in old age.

Review of Literature

Ageing is inevitable. Every individual on this planet has to go through this phase. Old age has been of major concern for the majority of the population. The fear of rejection, the inability of doing things, being dependent on others for all kinds of help and becoming victims of abuses by their family members because of being considered as a burden and liability to be rid of are some of the major fears. (Kapur, 2018)

The life expectancy of an average Indian has increased from 24 years in 1900 to 65.4 years in 2004. This results in an increasing number of elderly persons which contributes to 7% of India's population. (P.C. Bhatala, 1999).

According to Census 2001, older people were 7.7% of the total population, which increased to 8.14% in Census 2011 (Das, S. K. (2011). However, they face health issues such as hypertension if their systolic BP >140 and diastolic >90 mmHg (WHO 1996) and require treatment with antihypertensive medication (World Health Organisation)

The most prevalent health problems of the elderly were depression, osteoarthritis hypertension, and cataracts, – all treatable conditions. It requires the strengthening of geriatric health care services in accordance with the common existing problems in the community (Kamble, 2012). The Disability rate is a high of 5178 per 100,000 elderly populations (Velayutham, 2016)

Elderly people are vulnerable because of the way things change and become a bit challenging for them during old age. Society does not care much about the elderly and the government also lags behind in taking the needed steps in providing good social support to older people, Inequality also rules the lives of the elderly people. The government itself has rejected them in many ways possible and availability, accessibility and affordability of health care services has also been of great concern for the elderly population. (Mane, 2016)

Youth have a major role to play with regard to elderly people. Youth should make the world a place where elderly people are not afraid of old age but look forward to this phase in life. The problem does not lie in formulating new laws and provisions but a change of heart is needed, we as a society should start respecting and treating the elderly people as they deserve with love and care. (Prasad, 2017)

Elderly people face many psychological and physical issues. With reference to gender, compared to women, elderly men are more vulnerable to economic problems, while women face physiological issues more than men and both genders have equal issues pertaining to social well being. (Hemavathi & Rani, 2016)

Need and Significance of the study

The elderly community has been an integral part of the Indian population and are also one of the most vulnerable and neglected groups of people. Moreover, the lockdown brought about a sudden stop to their daily activities which resulted in them being affected physically, psychologically, socially and economically. This study aims at understanding the difficulties that elderly people are facing and how as a community we can be considerate towards the elderly adults of the community and make their lives more beneficial and comfortable.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-demographic details of the respondents.
2. To study the problems faced by the elderly people in the community.
3. To analyze the physical, social, economic, mental and psychological well being of the elderly.

Research methodology

The research methodology was descriptive in nature. The study was administered to elderly people above the age of 60 living in rural Bangalore and the sample size was 30 with simple random sampling as the research method applied. The researcher used a self-constructed questionnaire that consisted of 25 questions for data collection. The study could only be conducted with a limited population of elderly people of the community as the researcher had opted for simple random sampling. Because of the lockdown, the researcher also faced constraints in collecting the required samples.

Results and Discussion

Age and Gender

Table - 1

Variable		N	(%)
Age in Years	60-65	13	43.3
	66-70	9	30.0
	71-75	6	20.0
	76-80	2	6.7
Gender	Female	15	50.0
	Male	15	50.0

The well being of elderly persons

Table - 2

VARIABLE	RATING	N	%
Your overall health is	Excellent	8	26.7
	Fair	7	23.3
	Good	15	50.0
Do you get a monthly pension?	Agree	7	23.3
	Disagree	8	26.7
	Strongly agree	4	13.3
	Strongly disagree	11	36.7
Do you walk daily?	Agree	17	56.7
	Strongly agree	13	43.3
Do you visit the doctor when you feel sick?	Agree	18	60.0
	Disagree	2	6.7
	Strongly agree	4	13.3
	Strongly disagree	6	20.0
Could you get your monthly medicines?	Agree	21	70.0
	Strongly agree	9	30.0
Were you anxious and concerned about the uncertainty of things that were happening around?	Agree	11	36.7
	Disagree	5	16.7
	Strongly agree	6	20.0
	Strongly disagree	8	26.7
Did you experience the fear of being isolated from your children?	Agree	8	26.7
	Disagree	8	26.7
	Strongly agree	9	30.0
	Strongly disagree	5	16.7
Do you experience financial constraints?	Agree	10	33.3
	Disagree	8	26.7
	Strongly agree	7	23.3
	Strongly disagree	5	16.7
Do you receive financial support from your	Agree	17	56.7
	Disagree	2	6.7
	Strongly agree	3	10.0

children?	Strongly disagree	7	23.3
	Undecided	1	3.3
Do you have any major health problems?	Agree	9	30.0
	Disagree	16	53.3
	Strongly agree	1	3.3
	Strongly disagree	4	13.3
Are you optimistic about life?	Agree	15	50.0
	Disagree	2	6.7
	Strongly agree	7	23.3
	Strongly disagree	4	13.3
	Undecided	2	6.7
Do you feel that your community supports you?	Agree	20	66.7
	Disagree	1	3.3
	Strongly agree	9	30.0
Are you able to maintain your social relationships?	Agree	18	60.0
	Strongly agree	12	40.0
Do you consider yourself religious?	Agree	18	60.0
	Disagree	5	16.7
	Strongly agree	3	10.0
	Strongly disagree	1	3.3
	Undecided	3	10.0
Do you fear death?	Disagree	14	46.7
	Strongly disagree	14	46.7
	Undecided	2	6.7

Physical well being

The data collected shows that 76.7% of the respondents fall under the excellent and good category of health and are actively involved in all activities and they indulge in a lot of physical activities. Walking is a daily activity that is followed by all the elderly people in rural Karnataka and they have kept physical well being at their top priority and understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle

Psychological well being

The pandemic has not even spared the rural communities. Although the spread of the virus was less as compared to the urban areas the elderly has also been part of the roller coaster ride due to the pandemic. 56.7% of the elderly people reported that their lives had changed upside-down and uncertainty has been an emotion that has been ruling most of them. Children migrating from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and education have been on the rise. 56.7% of the elderly adults said that they fear being isolated from their children and the thought that whether they would get to meet their dear one in awake of the pandemic is foremost on their mind. Staying optimistic during old age is beneficial for the overall well being of the individual. 73.3% of the samples reported that they were optimistic about life and were facing various circumstances with positivism. Death is invincible and inescapable. Everyone will die one day or the other. Many people fear death and the thoughts about what will happen to their children and their belongings after they die, bother them a lot. However, the study concludes that 46.7% of elderly people did not fear death.

Social well being

Social relationships are essential in an individual's life. Maintaining good social relations helps in developing various skills to communicate and relate with others. 96.7% of the elderly people said that they were socially connected with their relatives, friends and dear ones and they also had good relations with the community and the villagers were always available for the elderly people in times of need and even as moral support.

Economic well being

The elderly people in the rural area were also affected economically. 56.6% of the respondents reported that they faced financial constraints during their lifetime and it became severe due to the pandemic but with the help of their children they were able to overcome their economic crisis. 56.7% of the elderly adults were supported financially by their children and were given good care, love and support.

Discussion

The elderly in the rural communities are much healthier compared to the elderly in urban areas, as they follow a better lifestyle than the urban elderly. Elderly people left behind in villages by their children are on the rise with industrialisation and better job opportunities in the city. This has a big impact on the elderly as they experience a fear of their children leaving them. And especially during the pandemic, the mental health of the elderly took a toll as they experienced a constant fear about the uncertainties that were going on around them, but most of them tried to be optimistic in general.

Recommendations

1. Old age people should be taken care of by their children and they should spend quality time with parents frequently.
2. Local bodies can conduct weekly and monthly gatherings for elderly people and make sure that they engage in recreational activities.
3. Government should pass bills in a way that the family members should never get any assets related to the elder people unless they are taken proper care of.
4. Youth should be made aware that elderly people are part of society and they should never be considered as a second option for anything.

Conclusion

Old age is considered a very monotonous period in one's life by most people. But it is actually the time to take rest and good care of oneself, and it is the time when individuals require the most care and love from their children and loved ones. They face a lot of issues physically, psychologically, socially, and economically. This study has proved that the elderly in rural areas are better physically, psychologically and socially than the elderly in urban areas. More attention is to be given to elderly people to help them engage in many activities. The government and organisations involved in providing service to elderly persons could collaborate to enhance the service to the elderly. The different dimensions of the issues could be addressed to enhance the

well being of the Elderly. The experiences of the elderly persons could be shared with the younger generation through specially designed customised programmes. The institutional structure should be strengthened to provide better services to the elderly.

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