

Challenges and Coping Strategies of Elderly in Shelter homes : A Qualitative Inquiry

Ghooman Ahirwar*, Waqar M Parray**, Sanjay Kumar***

*Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India

Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India *Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Doctor Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Background: The issue of aging has always been the cause of social concern globally. Old age is a period in a person's life when the body system diminishes in functionality. There is no specific age to be labeled as old age; however, different country categories age based on particular culture-specific criteria. As time passes, aging enters, bringing a series of physical, mental, emotional, and psychological pertaining increased illness of self and spouse, vulnerability to mental disorders, cognitive decline, etc.

Statement of the problem: Many times, it is observed that the elderly face many problems, which leads to physical, emotional, mental, financial, and adjustment difficulties, dissatisfaction with life achievements, guilt, feelings, etc. For these challenges, elder peoples need to adopt specific strategies to cope with difficulties and adapt to their life's new challenges. Keeping these issues in mind, the present study's objective was framed to find out the challenges and coping strategies of elderly living in shelter homes.

Method: Design of the Study: This study employs a qualitative research design for data collection. For this, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The obtained responses were transcribed, and thematic analysis was done to find out themes and subthemes.

Sample: The sample consists of 22 older adults (N=22, Male=12, Female=10, age range= 60 years above) selected from Anand Ashram of Sagar District.

Results: The Family conflict, rude behavior of the family members closed members, health issues; loneliness has emerged as the significant challenges which compelled them to leave their home.

Further, a flashback of past golden memories, reading of the religious books, and singing bhajan in the temples emerged as the elderly major coping strategies by the elderly.

Discussion: The study's themes and sub-themes indicate that elderly's living in Indian shelter homes face numerous problems. It is also evident that older people make their way to shelter homes to escape themselves from various financial and emotional hardships in the family. There is a need for specific concrete strategies to address the elderly's concerns in the final innings of life in such a situation.

Keywords: Elderly Abuse, Coping Strategies, Shelter Homes

INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, aging issues have recently begun to emerge as a cause of social concern. Soon the world will have a higher number of older adults than children. The elderly population has increased from 19.8 million in 1951 to 76 million in 2001 and 103.8 million in 2011. As per the World Ageing Report, it is estimated that the number of elderly persons could increase from 8 percent in 2015 to 19 percent in 2050 (United Nations, 2018). The projection also indicates that the number of 60 plus in India will increase to 143.20 million in 2021 and 173.2 million in 2026 (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2018). Old age is a period in a person's life when the body system diminishes in functionality. There is no specific age to describe old age. It has been challenging to set a certain age for old age. Different ages are considered old age in different countries. Studies about the elderly began in the early 1960s.

In the 21st century, the aging of the population has become an important demographic factor. The number of old age persons has steadily increased since 1948 due to the worldwide increase in life expectancy and decreased fertility rates (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, the world population of aged persons (aged 60 years and above) had already touched the figure of 25 crores in 1950 and 48 crores in 1990. Further, the more alarming fact is that many aged persons, i.e., 125 crores, are estimated to be added to the existing number of old age persons worldwide by the year 2025. This will increase the population of aged persons by 146 percent (Global Statistics, 2012). In India, the number of old age persons (60 years and above) was 4.3 crores (6.29 percent of the total population) in 1981, 5.5 crores (6.2 percent of the total population) in 1991, 7.7 crores (7.26 percent of the total population) in 2001. It has touched the figure of 10.3 crores (8.53 percent of the total population) in 2011 (reports of Census of India 1981 to 2011). Thus, it may be seen that the aging process is undergoing a fast rate in India.

Asia is home to 57 percent of the estimated 900 million persons aged 60 years and older in the world. The well-being of older people in this continent is gaining increasing attention among policymakers and researchers. Aging brings a series of physical, mental, emotional, and psychological (Lunenfeld, & Stratton, 2013). Some challenges include adapting and coping with change and loss, increased illness of self and spouse, vulnerability to mental disorders, cognitive decline, and more significant physical functioning limitations.

Today, the elderly population is the main focus of the various social planners and service providers. Under the impact of industrialization and modernization, there is simultaneous monitoring of the growing population with aging in terms of socio-economic impact, family relations, health, living conditions, and productivity. As the number of old persons is rising, and the social environment is changing, the need's proportions are also increasing. These factors are also leading to the need for a large number of nursing homes where the older adults may enjoy the end part of their lives in a group of their own.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Mathew et al. (2009) conducted a study to assess the stress, coping strategies, and quality of life of institutionalized and non-institutionalized elderly in Kottayam District, Kerala. Data used in this study were collected from a nursing home and a village in Kottayam with a sample of 150 respondents aged 60 or older. The survey used different tools such as socio demographic proforma for institutionalized and non-institutionalized elderly and WHOQOL-BREF Scale. The result reveals that institutionalized elderly have more stress and less quality of life compared to non-institutionalized ones.

Louise, Robichaud, Gelinas, and Johanna (2008) conducted a study on Coping Strategies and Social Participation in Older Adults (N=350) elder people randomly recruited older adults living at home independently. Sociodemographic and health-related characteristics were also assessed. Regression analyses were performed to evaluate the relationship between social participation, coping strategies, and other variables. Results revealed Behavioral coping strategies were the essential factor associated with daily activities, social roles, and total participation, followed by the type of living environment and age.

Kumar and Patra (2019) conducted a study to determine the prevalence of abuse and associated risk factors among community-dwelling elderly in an urban resettlement colony of east Delhi. This study was done among elderly residents aged 60 years and above in an urban resettlement colony of east Delhi. Data were collected regarding the socio demographic profile and prevalence of abuse. A total of 125 elderly were interviewed. Twelve (9.6%) reported experience of abuse. All abused participants faced neglect, four-faced verbal abuse, and two reported physical and one financial abuse. Abused elderly belonged to a higher age group >70 years and did not have regular contact with family and friends. The abuse was more likely when finances were managed by others and having a dependency on daily needs.

Nishanthi and Priya (2017) conducted a study on psychological problems and coping strategies of elderly persons residing in nursing homes. The sample consists of (N=100) older adults. They were recruited through the purposive sampling technique. The results for the psychological problems of elderly persons reveal that 60% of them had a moderate level of psychological problems, and 43% of the elderly persons have had an acceptable level of coping strategies. The study concluded that there was a negative correlation found between Psychological problems and Coping strategies. It means if their coping increases, psychological problems decrease.

Rakesh and Sharika (2014) conducted a study on Coping strategies adopted by the institutionalized and non-institutionalized elderly in Kathmandu, Nepal: A comparative correlation study (N=132) aged people of 60 years and above living in nursing homes and home settings in Kathmandu by using a pre-tested structured interview schedule. Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 19. The result revealed that coping strategies were effective among non-institutionalized elderly. There was a significant difference between coping strategies of the elderly living in institutional and non-institutional settings. The psychosocial problems were dependent on educational status, monthly income, and interpersonal

relations in institutionalized elderly and present job status, monthly income, and family type in non-institutionalized elderly.

Ramalingam et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional among all the older adults (60 years and above), from one of the four villages of a rural primary health center in Puducherry. Data were collected using a structured, pre-tested questionnaire on Sociodemographic details, elder abuse Screening Test, and QOL. Of the 243 elderly individuals studied, 63% were women. The prevalence of elder abuse was 50.2%. The findings reported that the elderly with higher education status were found to have lower odds of suffering from abuse than lower education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In developing countries, aging issues have recently begun to emerge as a cause of social concern. During the review, the process researcher reviewed several research articles related to older adults. It was found that the older adults faced many problems at home, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse, financial, and in fulfillment of needful basic things. It leads to physical, emotional, mental, financial, and adjustment difficulties, dissatisfaction with life achievements, guilt, feelings, etc. For these challenges, elder peoples need to learn and use different coping strategies to cope with difficulties and adapt to the new demands of their offspring's lifestyles. Sometimes, if they cannot adapt to these conditions or problems, they decide to go to shelter home and sometimes their offspring leave them in the shelter home. However, shelter home's infrastructures, rules regulations, structures schedule, and lifestyle demand another kind of adjustment and different coping strategies. The elderly need specific amenities such as health care, nutrition, and a sense of belonging, but the type and amount of treatment they receive mainly depend on the family's culture. Life becomes increasingly stressful during the aging process, and older adults become a liability rather than an asset to the families (Yadava et al., 1996).

Based on the literature and understanding, it is planned to address two main questions; first, to explore the type of challenges and coping strategies of people living in shelter homes.

Objectives of the Study

- To find out the challenges and coping strategies of elderly living in shelter homes

Method

Study design: This study employs a qualitative research design for data collection and analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted.

Sample

The sample consists of 22 older adults (N=22, Male=12, Female=10, age range= 60 years above) selected from Anand Ashram of Sagar District.

Development of Interview Schedule

To administer in-depth interviews for older adults' challenges and coping strategies, the researcher developed an interview schedule based on the existing literature. The questions were semi-structured and had enough flexibility for probing the interview. The interview schedule was assessed by two senior professors who are working in the field of qualitative research. The interview schedule was as follows:

1. आपका बचपन कहाँ और कैसे बीता?
2. आपके परिवार में कितने भाई बहन और कितने सदस्य हैं?
3. आपकी पढाई लिखाई कहाँ तक हुई है?
4. बच्चों को भी अपने पढ़ने भेजा?
5. आपके पास जमीन जगह है?
6. आपका व्यवहार अपने लड़कों बच्चों के प्रति कैसा है?
7. आपको समय पर खाना और जरूरत की चीजें बिना मांगे मिल जाती हैं?
8. घर पर आपकी सेवा होती, सभी आपकी बातें मानते हैं?
9. वृद्धा आश्रम में आने की वजह क्या रही?
10. वृद्धा आश्रम में आने के बाद आपकी दिनचर्या कैसी रहती है?
11. आपका यहाँ के बुजुर्ग साथियों के साथ कैसे संबंध रहता है?
12. यहाँ पर समय काटने के लिए आप क्या करते हैं?
13. यदि वे आपके साथ अच्छा व्यवहार करेंगे तो आप वापिस घर जाना चाहोगे?
14. आप कभी अपनी खुशी के लिये भजन या ईश्वर भक्ति करते हैं?

Procedure

At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the older adults. The consent was also taken for an audio recording of conversation during interviews. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder. They were assured of the confidentiality being maintained for the issues discussed. A neutral place was decided for each interview. The average time for each interview was thirty minutes.

The audio taped interviews were then transcribed and analyzed. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to code the interviews. Sections of data were coded by using keywords and then formed significant themes and sub-themes. An inductive approach to analysis was used throughout the process. The transcriptions were carefully read several times to obtain a general comprehension of the transcripts and the respondents' answers to the questions and draw the main themes.

Results

The following themes were derived using thematic analysis along with sub-themes.

1. **Family Conflict** (Sub-theme, On my own decision, Rude behavior of others)
2. **Challenges aftermath** (Sub-theme, Health-related problem, loneliness)
3. **Following themes are related to coping strategies** (Going temple, Singh bhajan, read religious books, flashback good memories,
4. **Future orientation themes** (Eager to go back home if cared by the family, No hope from the future, waiting for death).

Theme 1: Family Conflict

On my own decision

Many participants reported in the interview that it was challenging to care for their Grandchildren. The participants also revealed that it was their own choice to leave their homes and join shelter home. Many of the participants mentioned that the reason for leaving home was the absence of money

Poor behavior Son/ Daughter

Many respondents said that their children did not obey their words. They don't even care about them. One of the participants stated that he is afraid that he may take his life away because of property. Many others reported that their children are alcoholics, and that is why they left home. Two participants narrated that they have doubts about their children. So it was better to give them property.

Theme 2: Challenges aftermath

Health-related problem

Most of the participants reported that they feel many health problems like eye sight, stressful every time, etc. Some of them reported that their health is not fit. They feel laziness, depression, chest pain, etc.

Loneliness problems

One of the participants reported that after the death of his partner, they always feel alone. Few other participants narrated that they do not feel the parents who used to be like their parents. Many others stated that most of the time, they feel that everyone leaves them with no choice.

Theme 3: Coping strategies

(Going temple, Singh bhajan, read religious books, flashback good memories)

A couple of participants revealed that they go to the temple, doing worship of God. Many other respondents narrated that they love to read religious books. Some other participants reported that they listen

to songs and doing bhajans. Few participants reported that they remember their old days, their essential things. Interestingly a few others stated that they remember the love of their parents, their care, etc.

Theme 4: Future orientations themes

(Eager to go back home if cared for by the family, No hope from the future, waiting for death)

Many participants reported that if their family/children provide medicine/treatment or care to them, they will return home. Few others narrated that there is no future of going back home because their children don't care for them. Surprisingly, few participants narrated that now there is only one hope that they want to die.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the type of challenges and the ways of coping strategies of older adults. Thematic analysis of the interview reflected significant insight into the understanding of older adults' challenges and coping strategies.

During the thematic analysis, it was revealed that it is going difficult day by day to care for their Grandchildren. Moreover, the participants also revealed that it was their own choice to leave their homes and join shelter home. It was also evinced from the thematic analysis that the main problem for leaving their home was the absence of money. In some cases, it was also found that the lack of affection and care from their children was also the reason for their pain. Some other participants revealed that ignoring or avoiding them makes them feel helpless.

The interviews also emerged that one of the participants stated that he is afraid of his son that he may take his life away because of property. Many others reported that their children are alcoholics, and that is why they left home. In this way, we can observe the challenges the elderly facing in their homes. During the interview, it was also revealed that many participants are suffering from health issues like eyesight, stress, etc. Some of them reported that they feel laziness, depression, chest pain, etc. it was also evinced that the death of a life partner is the reason for loneliness among the elderly. One of the participants reported that after the death of his partner, they always feel alone. Few other participants narrated that they do not feel the parents who used to be like their parents. Many others stated that they feel that everyone leaves them with no choice most of the time. Such kind of feeling affects the emotional balance of the elderly.

While discussing the coping strategies of the elderly, it was evinced that going to the temple, doing worship of God as their main strategies. It was also depicted that reading religious books listening to songs and doing bhajans was the primary coping strategy among older adults. It was also revealed that remembering their old days, essential things in life, parents care and love was also a strategy among old people.

It was also revealed that elders want to get medicine/treatment or care from their families back home. Moreover, some narrated that there is no future in going back home because their children don't care for them. Surprisingly, few participants reported that now there is only one hope that they want to die.

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