

Periodic Research

Elder People Living in Old Age Homes of Lucknow (UP)

Abstract

Old age home is a growing phenomenon of developing India. Lack of support and care at home compel elderly people to choose Old Age Homes for their livelihood. This article describes a recent study of 13 Old Age Homes with 30 residents of Lucknow District. The study is a kind of exploratory research to know about the perspectives of elderly in Old Age Homes. Residents were found from the families who have no one to take care at home. The general increase of preference of these care centers is an alarming situation where every individual of our Indian society and policy makers should make an effort to realize elderly as an asset not a burden of our society

Introduction

Old age, an age when one finds himself or herself free from all social responsibilities and a stage when everybody would like to pass the rest of his or her life peacefully duly cared by those whom they cared throughout their lives, is now getting extremely miserable and pathetic. The much needed care and support at this phase of life is missing. The problem is aggravating day by day and has taken the form of a social stigma because the percentage share of elderly population in the total population of the country is showing secular increase over the years. This is due to decreasing mortality rate and increasing life expectancy due to improving health and medical facilities. A time series analysis of the decreasing mortality rate indicates that this growth in elderly population gained momentum during 1990s. Elderly population of India, which was 56.7 million in 1996, grew to 72 million in 2001 and expected to further grow to 137 million by 2021. Sex ratio in elderly population, which was 935 in the year 1996, is projected to grow to 1031 by the year 2016 (Raju, S, 2004). Problems of this group of population has multiplied over the years and the group is compelled to cope up with the same because of lack of any concrete steps or action plan from the government, non-governmental organizations or members of the family to address them. These problems include absence of assured and sufficient income to support themselves and their dependents during ill health, absence of social security, neglect in society due to growing age and non-availability of opportunities for creative use of free time.

In the past, the Indian society used to bestow responsible leadership roles and decision making powers to elderly people because of their vast knowledge and experience about the society and its functioning which they had acquired over the lifetime. But, the technological advancements due to industrialization, westernization and urbanization-under the purview of a distorted form of modernity-have neglected this status by weakening the unity and integrity of the joint family system and caste group. It is in such a context that the concept of old age homes emerged and they came into existence. Although this concept was not popular in India, but of late, these old age homes are coming up and also gaining lots of attention.

Statistics reveal that today, there are as many as 728 old age homes functioning in our country. Detailed information of about 547 such homes is available. Out of these, 325 homes are free of cost while 95 old age homes are on pay-and-stay basis. The information about any such payment structure for the rest of the homes is not available. A total of 278 old age homes all over the country are available for the sick and 101 homes are exclusively for men. (Helpage India,1998)

Need of the study

Today, India has more than 70 million of elderly population in the age group of 60+ years (Anonymus1998). A sample survey of 400 senior citizens of Lucknow city reveal that the retirement age in government offices, private sector and non-governmental organizations is much below the average life expectancy and as a result, these citizens feel economic

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hardships and social boycott during these gap years. In a period which is inflation hit, rising cost of living and scanty returns on savings has deteriorated the financial condition of these citizens. The problem is all the more severe for those old parents whose children are either settled abroad or in some other states for better career opportunities. This has resulted in mushrooming growth of old age homes in the society (Sharda S, 2010).

Growing old is a characteristic feature of all living creatures, but man stands out distinctly from others in thinking about it. The policies and programmes formulated and implemented by government and non-governmental organizations have almost failed to improve the status of senior citizens.⁵ There is a need for a study on the issue in order to bring to the forth the diversities of the ageing process, to generate awareness on the elderly issues and to design an alternate policy perspective for the effective implementation of the ongoing projects for this group of population. The present paper entitled “Elderly People living in Old Age Homes of Lucknow City” will be an eye opener for the policy makers.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To study about the socio-economic condition of residents of old aged people in old age homes.
- 2) To examine the reasons faced by elders prompting them to move to old age homes.
- 3) To suggest measures to strengthen the social support system for the elderly.

Methodology

To achieve the above objectives an exploratory research was conducted with elders in old age homes of Lucknow district. A sample of 13 old age homes in the city (11 NGO managed and 2 Govt. owned)were selected to obtain the information regarding above two objectives. Further a sample of 30 elderly men and women (about 2-3 from each home) belonging to 60 or above age group were drawn to collect required information. Pre-structured questionnaire consisted of open ended and closed questions to obtain the perspectives of elderly people in old age homes. For secondary sources of data collection, Statistics Division of State Planning Commission, Social Welfare Department of Govt. of UP, Census 2011 Reports were obtained and analyzed accordingly.

Results and discussions

- Most of the interviewed elderly respondents (70%) belonged to near by states of UP. (Bihar, Uttrakhand), cities (Unnav, Merruth, Varansi Barabanki) and rural areas of Lucknow.
- Majority of residents (60%) were found not to be highly educated particularly women.
- Most of residents (60%) were found from lower middle class, how ever 5 residents belonged to middle income group having little or no savings to meet their daily requirements during their old age.
- 30% of the residents were found to be economically secure as they were receiving some kind of pensions from the Government.
- In comparison to male, female residents were found to be economically deprived.
- Majority of the residents were unaware of Govt. schemes for social pensions, however they

opined the amount of pension was lower as compared to increasing cost of living

- Most of them were from nuclear family as they all were having children settled in their own family life.
- To find about the reasons to opt the old age homes, open ended question was asked. Major responses were listed out (Table-1).

Table-1
Reasons reported by elders for opting old age homes*

Sn	Reasons	Male	Female
1	Having no one to take care	10	12
2	Familial conflict	8	10
3	No home or shelter	4	5
5	Don't want to be burden/self respect	6	7
6	Fulfillment of need and care/ health problems	4	3
7	Lack of economic support	4	5

*preferences were recorded on the basis of more than one response.

The table shows that about 30-40% residents opted the old age homes because there was no one to take care at their home. About 20-30%residents chose such an arrangement due to familial conflict and to enable them to live a life of dignity and self respect. A little less than one fifth had chosen old age home living due to lack of economic support and for fulfillment of health need and support.

The result of the study is consistent with the result of Bharati K.(2009).As the results shows that for elderly people, the importance of old age home has increased due to diminishing care available to them in the family and other related factors. The reason might be due to the weakening of unity and integrity of joint family system. Increased inflation and high cost of living has changed the mind set of youth to adopt individualistic approach of life and due to this the social support and respect for elderly is in constantly deteriorating today. The responsibility and care of elders in a family has also undergone changed today due to increasing number of working couples. Consequently they feel lonely ness and neglected in their family.

The study also concludes that the Government owned Vriddhashram are less popular as compared to centers run by NGOs. Some NGOs are charging and giving better environment, facilities and services to them. But the beneficiaries among the older persons for various schemes and programmes implemented by Governments are insignificant to the larger size of older population.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Aging is natural phenomena of human life, the problems associated with it are also inevitable. At this stage of life one needs care, attention and respect more than ever. The support they get in a family environment contributes to their good health and emotional well-being. Healthy aging is a life long concept that includes the mental, social and physical well-being of people and communities. Healthy

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community address basic needs, promote optimal health and well-being, foster civic and social engagements and support the independence of elderly. To accomplish this, a broad-based collaborative approach is required for policy makers, service providers, individuals and families.

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