Aging Across the India: Problems & Strategies for Coping with Old Age

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Abstract—*Ageing is a universal phenomenon and each human being in the earth undergoes the process of ageing which has its own vibrant, beyond human control. In the human society, ageing is considered as a social occurrence rather than physiological, as ageing is always understood in the background of social environment. Socially, this stage was considered as the sum total of one's lived experiences. Like other social institutions, ageing is also a socially constructed concept and well thought-out as social truth In India, however, all persons who are sixty years or above are included among the aged. The number of aged has increasingly multiplied since 1948, due to the decreased fertility and increased life expectancy rates worldwide (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, the world's old age population (60 years and older) had already marked the figure of 251 million in 1950 and 488 million in 1990. Based upon the data as mentioned previous, a more shocking number i.e. 1,250 million is estimated to be added to this immensity of ageing population by the year 2025 which shows a startling increase of 146 per cent (Global Statistics, 2012) In India old age population (60 years and above) are 10,32,31,265 (8.53%) according to census of India,2011 . In a developing country like India, old age has become a serious social issue at the present time. . It is proved that with age, the brain mass decreases and number of brain cells suffers severe turn down. This age related changes have very important worth on functional abilities, in terms of physical, psychomotor, sensory, cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural functioning are likely to spectator a deteriorating trend as the age advances. The problems become more compound when their children start neglecting them and the elderly people face psycho-social problems and economic & health problems also. A number of factors are contributing to the problems of the aged such as Individualism, urbanization; industrialization and modernization have led to change in the economic constitution, the wearing downhill of societal values, deteriorating of social values, and social institutions such as the joint family. The main objectives of this paper is to address the certain problems of the old age people and highlight some strategies in social work perspectives for coping with old age problems.*

Keyword*: Aging, functional abilities*

Introduction

Ageing is a universal phenomenon and each person in the earth undergoes the process of ageing which has its own vibrant, beyond human control. Old age is the last stage of human life span, with the total constellation of social, biological and psychological changes that occur in this stage (Richard, 1962). In the human society, ageing was well thought-out as a social phenomenon rather than physiological, as ageing is always understood in the background of social environment. Socially, this stage is considered as the sum total of one's lived experiences. Like other social institutions, ageing is also a socially constructed concept and well thought-out as social truth. The term 'age' means the length of time for which a person has existed and if that endurance is for a long time, the society considers him as 'aged'. The aged is defined in various ways. The Indian definition included those who are sixty years or above at the time of the survey as aged. According to internationally accepted definition; an aged is one who is sixty five year of age or above. In India, however, all persons who are sixty years or above are included among the aged.

Ageing of the population is one of the important demographic factors that have emerged in the 21st century. The number of elderly has gradually multiplied since 1948, due to the decreased productiveness and increased life expectancy rates worldwide (World Bank, 2011). Moreover, the world's elderly population (60 years and older) had already marked the figure of 251 million in 1950 and 488 million in 1990. Based upon the data as mentioned earlier, a more shocking number i.e. 1,250 million is estimated to be added to this mass of ageing population by the year 2025 which shows a startling increase of 146 per cent (Global Statistics, 2012). In India the number of persons in the age group of 60 above were 43 million (6.29 percent) in 1981, 55 million (6.20 percent.) in 1991, 77 million (7.26 percent.) in 2001 and now 103 million (8.53 percent.) in 2011. (Census of India 1981 to 2011) Which needed socio-economic and emotional support for this fast increasing population, it's a big challenge of the planners in future years. The ageing process in India is therefore undergoing at a fast rate. Upgrading in life expectancy has created fundamental changes in the age structure of the population, which in turn leads to the ageing population. In India total dependency ratio are 652 and young population (15to59 age group) dependency ratio are 510, old age (60 plus age group) dependency ratio are low 142 as compared to young population according to census of India 2011. As the ratio increases there may be an increased burden on the productive part of the population to maintain the nurture and pensions of the economically dependent. This results in

nonstop impacts on financial expenditures on things like social security, as well as many indirect penalties.

In a developing country like India, aged has become a serious social issue today. There are some problems of old age people which old age people face in their life.

Problems of Old Age Persons

Physical Problems

During the old age stage metabolism processes became slows down. Old age became weak both physically and mentally. They are more prone to illness, diseases, syndromes, etc. The resistance of a person is lowered. Older people are mostly suffering to non-communicable diseases. Reducing health due to increasing age is complex by non-availability to better quality, age-sensitive health care services for a large section of older persons in the country. In addition to this poor convenience and lack of awareness and knowledge in combination with high costs of disease supervision makes old age care away from the reach of older persons, especially those who are poor and underprivileged. Few diseases which are common in old age are obesity, diabetes, greyish of hair colour, tapering hearing, wrinkling of skin, liver acne on the skin, quickness and slower feedback times, and reduced ability to clear thinking, diminished eyesight, and difficulty recalling reminiscences, weakness to bone diseases such as osteoarthritis.

Psychological Problems

There are so numerous psychological problems faced by old age persons in their life. Social problems also influence one's psychological condition of a person. It was found that the less communication of the persons with their family members and society leads them to a condition of social isolation. Loneliness, emotional departure, lack of opportunities for sharing feelings and feeling of humiliation are the major psychological problems faced by old age people. Loss of a spouse has a profound effect on health and is one of the primary causes of depression. Being left single-handedly often prevents many older persons from enjoying life. Use of multiple medicines, retirements, financial crisis, fear of death, passing away etc. worsens the circumstances. With beginning of old age mindset also changes. First of them is fear which is faced by both realistic and illogical elderly. Inactivity is other in which old age person is made to consider in that he or she is not physically fruitful or useful and with it he or she can't do much meaningful in his or her life. It occurs due to infused sluggishness, lack of personal goals, and withdrawal from odd jobs. This has a enormous negative emotional impact on person. Last one being the lowered self-worth. It includes disregard; decrease is responsibility, decrease in value, declining worth, and isolation.

- **Loneliness**

Loneliness is an important factor that increases other psychological problems of old age. As per the widespread belief of the society old age people are to be cared by the family but they face loneliness still within the family. Majority of the old age are alive within the nuclear family. During the whole day there is no one to communicate to them and listen to to them because the family members go out for their job or education.

- **Emotional hostility**

Majority of the old age people feel hostility in the society. They are facing emotional separation from the family and the neighbourhoods. They do not have any right to take decisions on family matters. The old age persons also faced injustice and insecurity in the environment.

- **Lack of Opportunities for Sharing Feelings**

Majority of the old age persons are not ready to reveal any of their personal feelings with others. Unmarried, divorced and widowed old age persons are not ready to share their personal matters with others because in the absence of a life partner they have no trustworthy persons to pay attention to them. Old age persons have a terror that if they reveal their personal problems that will affect their social status and create more stress.

Social Problems

There are a variety of social problems faced by old age persons such as lack of involvement in the community, family and society programme and events. The attitude of the family members and society towards old age are very apathetic and problems related with earnings and economic status that also influence the status of the old age persons.

- **Lack of Participation in Social Life**

The old age persons have little social contribution due to their physical weakness and social backwardness. Few old age persons participate in funerals and marriages within the nearby areas. Most of them do not like to contribute in any festivals and do not consider that they have any role in society.

- **Unconcerned Attitude of Family and Society**

The society does not regard as old age as normal people. The old age people are not fully pleased with their relationship with the society. Conventionally Indian Society has cherished and regarded the aged. The younger generations treated the aged as the fortune house of care, knowledge and power. Family has been felt whole if there is at least one aged person. For performing religious rituals, on the occasions of births, deaths and mainly in marriages the elderly are consulted and their view is respected. But industrialization and urbanization have brought changes to family composition in India to a large amount. This has influence the position of the elderly in the family as well as the family's aptitude to take care of the aged. As custody parents in old age homes draws disparagement from social networks and community at large.

Problems Related With Income and Economic Status

Income or economic self competency highly affects one's condition and position in the society. This problem arises when elderly are incapable to persist themselves economically. They moreover lack the capacity to be creative or lack the opportunity as they were before. They misplace their independency due to increase in great effort from young generation, sluggishness in physical and mental state, attitude of society, undernourishment, decrease in access to resource, lack of awareness about the rights and entitlements with changing times. These all things play important roles in lowering the capability of old aged to stay finically fruitful. Work provides us not only with earnings but also with social contact and a sense of purpose.

Strategies for coping with old age in social work perspectives

- The awareness programme should be organised by the social worker in the community through street play, group meeting and prepare some volunteer in the community to work in the area of old age. The social worker also organise the programme with the collaboration of health or welfare department.

- In general hospital, the govt should take initiative to establish a geriatric department separately so that the services are easily accessible to old age.

- Training on psychosocial counselling: This is the delivery of a professional training on psychosocial counselling by a particular institute. The aim is to produce a cadre of knowledgeable social workers, counsellors and psychologists who will serve in old age welfare organisations caring for old age. The training improves the excellence of psychosocial counselling and care for old age persons who suffers from various problems.

- Old age homes and healthy safe shelters can be established for inclusive rehabilitation services for old age people. The old age people can advantage from a multidisciplinary and participatory approach, which improves psychosocial care and revitalization services.

- Social workers in rehabilitation centres should work closely with non govt and govt organisations for referral recovery, reintegration and legal security services. The social workers should know that it is vital to draw on existing proficiency in offering well-rounded services and construction a good network, which involves a multidisciplinary approach.

- The social worker as the case manager in exacting must make sure that the best interests of the old age are served. The worker should bring out an individual case assessment to find out needs, develop an individual care plan, and refer the old age to suitable services depending on the needs.

- The social worker should be concerned in the formulation of policies and laws which will spotlight on the prevention of old age problem and the promotion of old age people. This includes participation in the drafting of legislation, norms and minimum standards to be followed when portrait services. In addition, there is a need of policy which main focuses on health care and economic aspect of old age. Also need of man power development programme in the area of old age. The university based multidisciplinary centre should be established in the area of aging.

- The social workers should be more proactive and do more research on the topic of old age. This will support them in playing a more prominent role in the prevention of old age problems.

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