

Voice of Family – In Perspective of Elderly from Old Age Homes of Pune, India

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INTRODUCTION

Population ageing is considered one of the biggest challenges of demographic transition in the 21st century. What was earlier seen as a phenomenon occurring mainly in the developed countries of Europe and North America is now found to be a major concern of the developing countries as they are ageing faster than developed countries. In India, the proportion of the population aged 60 years and above was 7 percent in 2009 (88 million) and is expected to increase to 20 percent (315 million) by the year 2050 (Karade, 2016). With this growth comes a concomitant increase in the numbers of people for whom issues relating to the quality of life becomes more salient. The process of ageing affects all social groups, and every type of social relationships, in all societies. It should be emphasized that the issues of population ageing are not related only to the elderly but are also, compared to other age sectors of the population (Bartam, 2005). Like many other developing nations, India also suffers from over-population, meager resources, and sluggish or arrested development. The most critical feature of her economy is its pervasive poverty and the acute inequalities in income distribution making an overwhelming majority of the elderly either destitute or a marginalized category (Bali, 1999).

Drawing from the modernization theory (Cowgill, 1974) and the symbolic interaction perspective which proposes that elders' identities have socially created through their interactions, this study shall attempt a psychosocial analysis of the lives of the older adults in the old age homes of Pune city, India. It's now evident that there is a clear-cut distinction between demographic and social aging. With changing social roles of the elderly regarding role eligibility, role appropriateness, and role modification, it would be interesting to study how they are coping with their lives and what role does the old age homes play in the process. The study would primarily explore the conditions of loneliness and depression among these people.

Though earlier few kinds of literature have been focused on the issues of elderly and old age homes, still due to the change concerning time, there are some dimensions required to be at the center. Like, earlier the aged parents used to leave for ashrams or Tirth Yatra, meaning doesn't want to be a burden on family members and letting them live in their way. There are tremendous changes in the social and family structure, which has affected the culture and norms of the society. The process of modernization and search for a better standard of living and job

opportunities forced children to move away leaving their parents behind. In such cases, either child is providing as an option 'old age homes' or parents are moving towards it. There are many reasons for the increasing number of old age homes and even for elderly to join them. Earlier there were only a few fundamental issues behind entering the old age homes such as destitute, needy, abandoned by the family and relatives or loss of economic and social support, now the possibility is raised for other reasons also, like – willingness to join, for safety propose and for better facilities.

It is very emotional for any human to leave their former house and live somewhere else. Especially for the elderly, if they have planned that after retirement they will spend their time with family and grandchildren. As still in the rural part the prevalence of Joint family system is superior, at least until the elderly male member is alive. With the changing social and family structures the older needs to get adapted accordingly, but due to being older not only by ages or experiences but also by physical and mental, adaptation beyond a certain point is not feasible for them. Space has got importance, which results that both the generations are moving towards the independent life, but like to be in touch according to their comfort, even do not want to disturb or burden unnecessarily to each other, feel and live free.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

To determine the various issues experienced by the elderly after joining the old age home, apart from familial matters.

SAMPLE SIZE: There is no prevalence available of the elderly entering or residing in the old age homes. Hence, the sample size is fixed for this study which is 500 elderly. To acquire this sample size, around 15 OAHs are visited by the researcher.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA: Only those elderly were interviewed who were aged 60 years and above age group, currently living in old age homes and who had spent at least one year in the OAHs. Those old age homes are not part of this study, which have not completed at least 2 years of functioning. In this study, those elderly are excluded who are unable to respond and suffering from any type of psychological problems.

DATA AND METHODS

Primary data collection has done from Old Age Homes of Pune city. This study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the collection of data, the semi-structured questionnaire used after approval from the Student Ethical Review Committee (SERC). For

the selection of the Old Age Homes simple random sampling adopted. The HelpAge India NGO has provided the list of Old Age Homes of Pune, with the help of this list the random selection is possible. The selection procedure has done as follows– Out of all the total 83 Old Age Homes, only 15 selected randomly, here the different type of old age homes are taken into account, the classes are government, private and others, i.e., five old age homes from each. And to fulfill the required sample size, the number of respondents from each selected old age home has decided according to the proportion. Then for the selection of the respondent systematic random sampling has undertaken.

FINDINGS:

There is a considerable proportion of elderly residing at Old Age Homes, who are never married, this proportion is close to the one-fourth of the total. Out of those institutional residents who are ever married, more than 70 percent of them have at least one living child. And more than half of the ever-married elderly have at least one son. Around three-fourths of the elderly reported that they willingly joined the Old Age Home, only 25 percent were forced to stay at the institution. According to the provided reasons to join the institution, only one-third of the elderly joined the OAH by own choice, i.e., willingly. The most observed reason is that 30 percent of the elderly were alone, primarily due to never-married status, and widowhood. About 35 percent of the elderly were forced by their children to stay at the Old Age Home. Although a considerable share of the elderly is residing half-heartedly at old age home, around 80 percent of these residents appreciated the facilities and care of the institution available for them.

Half of the elderly gone through the much adjustment and changes after joining the old age home, and those who have gone through such transformation almost 40 percent of them experienced the positive one, whereas the more than half suffered and suffering after joining the institution. While talking about the stigma associated with the Old Age Home residence, only 13 percent responded that there a stigma with such setup. Around two-thirds of the residents said that the other elderly who are staying with their children and other family members are better off compared to themselves. And 56 percent of the elderly feel that they are abandoned by their family, children, or relatives.

Conclusion:

A massive number of elderly joined the old age home, as they were alone at the previous resident. One of the significant contributing factor to this reason is – their ‘Never Married’ status. It leads to living them either alone or with siblings or parents, but when this cohort

entered the old age group, they moved willingly to the old age homes. Almost seven elderly out of ten were having children, and still residing at the old age home. Primarily due to the conflicts with daughter-in-law and lack of care or support from their children, mainly from son. Again this fact contributed to join the old age home willingly, with the hope that at least here, at old age home, they will find peace. They are satisfied with their decision, as most of them saw the care provided at the old age home is better. Despite all, more than half of the elderly thinks that the elderly staying with their families are better off compared to themselves and two-third proportion perceives that their families left them to live alone.

Appendix:

Table 1 – The reasons for joining the old age home

Reason for Joining OAH	Frequency	Percent
Alone or Nobody is there	153	30.60
No Children or Married	49	09.80
Self-decided	72	14.40
Health	50	10.00
Family Issues / Fights	62	12.40
Son Stays away	49	09.80
Due to Daughter-in-law	25	05.00
No one is ready	40	08.00
Total	500	100.00

Table 2 – The major changes in life of the elderly after joining the old age home

Major Changes After Joining the OAH	Frequency	Percent
Health Improved	13	5.28
Adjustment	22	8.95
Got Positive Things/Change	53	21.54
Good Care and OAH	31	12.6
Homesickness	37	15.05
Issues-Health, Facility	13	5.28
Disciplined, Strict, Hostel	33	13.41
Negative Feeling-Alone, Left Out	20	8.13
Neither Good Not Bad	24	9.76
Total	246	100