



A review of the current status of elderly in India

Vishnuprasad C

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, and Management, Vijaya College RV Road, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Abstract

India has undergone a sea of changes in multiple dimensions- economic, political, technological, and legal in the last seven decades. In this regard, a gradual compromise of deep rooted values and moral principles has been observed in pursuit of westernization, bringing along its own merits and shortcomings as well. In this regard, it becomes extremely necessary to understand the impact of these revolutionary changes upon the elderly, who have been a witness to both the traditional era and the current period of advancement. This paper presents a collection of facts in an attempt to outline some major challenges faced by the elderly in India and offers some remedial measures to overcome the same.

Keywords: undergone, elderly, political, economic

1. Introduction

Human society has undoubtedly progressed to a tremendous extent in its advancements with respect to various aspects of education, science, technology, and communication. In terms of pluralistic thinkers, it is very simple to decipher that each of these accomplishments are conscious attempts to maximize the universal good, while surpassing any previous feats that might have fallen short in integrating all grounded principles and their respective deductions into real time working models. The paradox underlying the entire set of mechanisms is while all these intricacies seem to have begun from pluralism i.e., maximum pleasure as the focal point, a major chunk of the population i.e., those approaching the evening of their life, are ignored.

There is no single exhaustive definition with respect to old age. Some key inferences about old age are-

- "that segment of life which succeeds the active phase of an individual's life"
- "that stage which provides ample time for relaxation and avocation"
- " that age after which he/she ceases to be deemed fit for employment"
- " the average stage of an individual's lifespan where cognition and mobility seems to decrease"
- "that age after which the probability of chronic diseases and disability steeply increases"

The term old age always does not manifest itself as a stage which invokes skeptic assumptions, signaling insecurity and carrying a warning sign about the inevitable. Rather it brings about a host of pleasant gifts for a person who has persevered for quite a long time.

Some of the positive traits of old age are

1. Ample time for avocation- it is rightly observed by many elderly individuals that most of their untapped potential is perceived to the required degree only in the later stages of their lives. These include interest in music and other fine arts.
2. Grandchildren- enable the elderly to relive their past and replenish their fond memories of bringing up

children. There is a high probability that the elderly regain their lost enthusiasm in the company of grandchildren.

3. Adequate time towards socialization- occasions and festivals which might have been otherwise missed out can be regularly attended to by the elderly, making them feel livelier.
4. Travels and tours- financially sound elderly get a very good option to visit distant places that they always wanted to, and would be happier to visit rural areas and native places, that transport them to a different plane.

However there are multiple challenges that come in way of hindering the cup of happiness to be full for the elderly.

These challenges may include chronic diseases, disabilities, low agility and cognitive decline, as well as domestic issues caused due to indifference of family members, and most importantly neglect. All these factors gradually induce the elderly lose their inclination towards even those activities which they earlier enjoyed.

2. Review of literature

1. Health, illness and frailty in old age: a phenomenological exploration-Susan Pickard

The main aim of this paper was to bring out a more objective and clinically classified view to frailty. The paper highlighted the continuity of phenomenological structures of experience across healthy aging, normal aging, and frailty. After speaking about the contested concept of frailty with suitable illustrations, the author has laid emphasis on the enormity in the differences in understanding the concept of frailty, and agrees with the statement " the frail older person do not exist"

2. Escaping 'the old fogey': Doing old age through intergenerational friendship (Catherine Elliott O'Dare, Virpi Timonen, Catherine Conlon)

The fundamental aim of this study was to remove all hurdles associated with establishment of harmony between generations. After an investigation based on direct observations where the elderly participants were required to

perform some mundane tasks with younger generations, it was observed that there was neither lack of enjoyment and enthusiasm, nor the elderly denied accepting their chronological age. This has been observed as the best method of negotiating cultural and social barriers.

3. The need for a social revolution in residential care (Kristine Theurer, W. Ben Mortenson, Robyn Stone, Melinda Suto Virpi Timonen, Julia Rozanova)

Prime emphasis in this paper was laid down upon loneliness and depression which were termed as two serious mental health conditions across assisted living centers, nursing homes and residential care alike. The paper argued that residents are a powerful source of untapped psychological care. Yet another factual argument made is that the elderly by catering to psychological needs of others by dint of their experience can find themselves self sufficient.

3. Present indian Scenario for the elderly-

According to the Global Age watch Index 2014, India ranks second in terms of the highest elderly population across the world. However it was devastating to note that India ranked 73rd

Out of the selected 91 countries in giving elders the much needed and deserved welfare of the elderly. The GAWI stated the poor ranking of India in all the parameters measured namely, income security, employment and education, health status and an enabling environment.

It can be observed that there are other parameters to be met as well apart from the above such as psychological and social criteria for the elders attaining fulfillment.

One major factor to which social and psychological shortcomings of the elderly can be attributed is the advent of nuclear families, where it is observed children accommodates their elderly parents and particularly elderly widowed women either to take care of their children or to attend to various household chores. Many of the old-elderly, i.e., above the age of 85, belong to the pre-independence era which was wholesome in terms of family values, and are unused to such selfish view about life.

Many old age homes lack ambulances and ready medical facilities, a Delhi survey revealed in 2014. Multiple surveys have time and again suggested that there are old age homes lacking basic amenities.

Corporatization of hospitals has reduced the fundamental requirement of care and affection that is naturally expected and yearned for by the elderly. Many corporate hospitals neglect the intrinsic disability of elderly and dismiss their complaints under the umbrella of the term "age related diseases."

Non availability of family members at the times they are needed the most is yet another frustrating factor for the elderly. Certain medications to be self administered at home, such as insulin shots and home tests such as self monitoring blood pressure and capillary glucose may not be possible by the elderly themselves owing to poor cognition and poor vision. These factors may turn out to be potentially hazardous, resulting in an overdose that may turn out fatal.

There is also lack of social independence with too much of restrictions by family members and a close watch as regards the social contacts of the elderly person can be both depressing and insulting. All these factors accumulate to threaten the very social existence of the individual.

The elderly are also denied from pursuing their hobbies by

means of extraneous variables such as poor vision for reading books and losing timber of voice for vocal music, and can possibly de-motivate them.

The state of elderly in India Report 2014 documented the then status of elderly in India. One of the main segment of the study was regarding elderly, which revealed a shocking 60% and 75% of abuse at Kolkata and Bengaluru consisting of verbal abuse, disrespect and neglect.

Despite the existence of "Maintenance and Welfare Act for Senior Citizens", low awareness and conservative attitudes still prevent senior citizens from approaching the legal mechanism for claiming their rightful income. The act very clearly states the penalty for a person who leaves an elderly individual in any place to wholly abandon him/her.

All these facts throw light on the inadequacies involved in ensuring the sustenance and care of the elderly in the country and call for a non-stereotypical groundbreaking method of enhancing the quality of their lives.

4. Conclusions and suggestive measures

- Financial insecurity is not the only constraint in terms of stopping the elderly from leading a hassle free life.
- Betterment of elderly in India rather needs a holistic and multidimensional approach that focuses upon wealth and income, social needs, psychology, healthcare and legal support.
- Mere existence of a legal framework without being sufficed by adequate awareness falls short of its objectives as it is not either understood, or leads the elderly succumb to pressure by other family members.
- Development is possible only when change begins at the grassroots, with the family members realizing the value of elders, who are treasure-houses of experiences and principles.
- Empathy at the individual level, accompanied by a realization that no individual has an exit route from aging, makes the person more humane and guides him towards better attitude with respect to the elderly.
- Corporate hospitals must realize the fundamental reasons for their existence is service towards humanity, and the elderly in particular, without which they disgrace not just themselves but the society in which they serve as well.
- Authorities responsible towards defining the curriculum at school and colleges must emphasize on an ever-increasing scale on value education and make sure that Indian values of respect and worship of elderly are taught well.

To conclude, a country is said to prosper not merely on achieving economic betterment, but only when it has realized the core principles of philanthropy and strives to maximize the bliss of every component of the society. Indian culture can truly excel to reach great heights on the event of conscious efforts being taken to wipe out all pains surrounding the elderly.

5. References

1. <https://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/standpoint-elderly-care-why-india-is-one-of-the-worst-countries-to-grow-old-in-2138686>
2. <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/as-india-ages-over-61-of-elderly-will-have-no-income-security-by-2050/717511/>

3. <https://www.helpageindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ELDER-ABUSE-IN-INDIA-2018-A-HelpAge-India-report.pdf>
4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/India-ranks-73rd-in-elderly-care-Survey/articleshow/23374230.cms>