

LONLINESS AND ISOLATION AMONG ELDERLY: A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON CAUSES AND PREVENTIVE METHODS

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Abstract: *We have a popular saying that “Old is Gold”, Elders are not burden to the Society; they are real wealth of a society with their rich experience. Elders are the mostly neglected category of current scenario of a society. Most of the elders are abused in terms of care and protection from own children and also by the government. Elders are suffering from loneliness and other psychological associated disorders most of these problems accrued due to improper care from own brood and other socio economic, cultural reasons. Reasons behind this are drastic changes in traditional family system; most of the joint families are replaced by nuclear families. Due to their children's education and employment parents are sending children far distances and in many cases it is leading to permanent separation of parents and children. This is affecting the parent children relationship, this may cause stress among elders as the result of stress elders become more care dependent. In the nuclear families caring of elders become hectic burden and increasing the risk of elderly abuse. Loneliness and isolation are leading to depression, unhealthy behavior, long term illness, cognitive decline and risk of dementia etc. Most of the elders are suffering age related disorders; health care services are not in a reach to elders. Other concern is that most of the elders are not aware of their rights. Government should take immediate action in order to protect elder's rights should provide free health insurances and other financial aid. There should be law provisions to avail proper care and protection from own children and governments. Government should also bring awareness among the society to respect elders in all form of dignity.*

Key words: *Elderly abuse, free health insurances, Isolation, Joint family, Law provisions.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Ageing or becoming older is a natural phenomenon of every living organism. Above 60 years age people called as senior citizens or elders. According to their knowledge and vast experience they are considered as great assets and treasure of knowledge to a nation. They are helping for all round development of a nation by their experience. They are filling the gaps between the generations and maintaining reciprocal relations between the generations. They are controlling the aggressive decisions of youth by their experience. Stability, generosity, vision, and peace are the pillars of their ideas.

The demographic profile of India is changing, the ageing population was just 7.5% in 2001 has increased to 8.6 by 2011. It is predicted that the population of senior citizens in India could be around 19% of total population by the year 2050. Ageing leads to many changes in human body it may cause deteriorating muscle power, visual impairment and vision loss, low hearing capacity, decreased memory power and other health related issues. Most of the elders are not aware of this age related changes and health problems, it may lower their self-esteem and they may become more care dependent on their family members. Today most of the joint families are replaced by nuclear families. Caring of elders became hectic burden to the family members. In other aspect elders are remaining alone and feeling lonely and isolated.

2. DISCUSSION:

Causes for loneliness and isolation among elderly

Loneliness and social isolation can occur at any stage of life, but it is more common in old age. Elders are suffering from different types of psychological problems; most of these problems arise from loneliness and isolation. Loneliness and social isolation are closely associated with physical and mental illness such as dementia, depression and high blood pressure. Loneliness and isolation may leads to other bad habits like alcohol consumption and smoking, Loneliness and isolation may require special medical care for elders. Social isolation and loneliness are health risks. Social isolation and loneliness are not the same health issue; they may therefore also require different solutions.

3. ANALYSIS:

Problem of doing daily activities with the declining functional abilities, activities of daily living are the basic tasks of everyday life such as feeding, bathing, dressing, mobility, use of toilets and continence and when old people

are not able to perform these activities, they require assistance. Depending on others for daily activities leads to elders abuse, neglect and exploit. Women elders are more abused than men.

- Increased old age homes are indicating that, family members are not providing space for elders in their families.
- Insecurity feeling in related to property and person, this problem may come from family or society. Elders experience difficulties in obtaining both security and redress, lack of security in old age leads to mental distress.
- Communication gap between the children and elders, changes in technology is lowering the elder's confidence. Most of the children are spending their time with entertainment media and social media, even not interested to talk/spend time with elders. There is a generation gap in relations between grand parents and children, this problem is most commonly appears in urban areas compared to rural areas. Another aspect of this problem is elders who are illiterates belongs to rural areas and their children who are educated and grownup by their parents hard work are forgetting their elders care and protection.
- Health problems. Being unaffordable for treatment cost or unable to avail healthcare services, long term illness like cancer, heart disease
- The problem of loneliness and isolation is more prevalence in urban areas compared to rural area. Elders who are getting proper care from their children are mostly who are having assets and financially strong people. Elders who are having poor financial back ground are getting poor care from their children compared to other. This problem somewhat less in rural areas.
- Lack of nutrition and inability to access proper nutrition
- Being mentally and socially stressful due to the harassment of family members. Financial abuse, emotional abuse.
- Excessive emotional dependence on children may leads to stress among elders
- Loss of spouse: older adults are at increased risk of being socially isolated or lonely. By the time people reach their 80s, the majority live on their own, mostly because of widowhood. This is particularly the case for older women who are more likely to be widowed than older men. Older people's social networks often get smaller for other reasons as well – children may have moved away, along with grandchildren, and aging siblings and friends may have died. Loneliness is also prevalent among older adults. The problem is even higher among those 85 years or older – 25% of individuals in that age bracket felt lonely some of the time or often. Living alone, health problems and disability, sensory impairment such as hearing loss, and major life events such as loss of a spouse have all been identified as risk factors for social isolation and loneliness
- Elders who are not having children have to work their own even in old age to manage material and physical needs.
- According to World Health Organization, mental health disorders account for 13 percent of the global diseases and particularly among older adults.
- Being separated, feeling of loneliness and isolated, lack of physical, emotional, financial support. Improper care from care takers and old age homes. Elder abuse refers to intentional or negligent act by caregiver or any other person that causes harm or serious risk to a vulnerable adult. The perpetrators are generally family members and relatives, friends, or trusted caregivers.
- Lack of financial aid and health insurance policies making elders more insecure.
- Most of the elders are neglected by own family members, other problem is that lack of effective protection from government.
- Most of the families are feeling that elders are unnecessary burden in their routine life, being inadvertently among elders.
- Wilful negligence, refusing medical aid to elders is the other problem.

4. LAWS RELATED TO WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF ELDERLY:

Constitutional provision to protect and support rights of elderly and Social, political, economical justice is the core aim of the Indian constitution.

Social protections: article 41: right to education, right to work, right to get help. The Government should take necessary steps to help the elderly, the sick, and the disabled, the unemployed to work, to educate and assist.

Laws designed to provide social protection for the elders

Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (1956)

The elder have the right to get support and help from their offspring. As per Criminal procedure code 1973 section 125 (1) (d) and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance act 1956 section 20 (3) this claim is legally binding.

National policy for older persons-NPOP

National Policy for Older Persons was declared in 1999. According to this it should provide financial, food, health and residential care to the elderly.

Aims of NPOP

- Encourage everyone to arrange appropriate arrangements for their old age life.
- Each family should be encouraged to take care of the elderly in their families.
- To take support of volunteer organizations in this program
- Care for the vulnerable elderly and should pay attention to them
- Health care facilities for elderly people
- Maintaining appropriate research training programs for volunteers to serve the elderly
- Providing for a healthy sense of purpose to live in a useful and independent life

Maintenance and Welfare of Parent's and Senior citizen act, 2007

This act was enacted in December 2007 by Indian parliament. Protecting the rights of older persons through the tribunals established at Tahasil, Sub-Division levels. Re-acquisition of previously-denominated assets for sons who are neglects their Parents.

Legal actions on sons who neglect the elderly

Establishment of old age homes, Provide appropriate medical facilities and preservation

To understand the elder's problems in society we should understand the changes in traditional Indian family system.

Family

Family is the basic social unit. Family represents people living together by ties of marriage blood or adoption thus represents the single household, according to sociology the family has the primary function of reproducing society biologically, socially, or both.

Joint Family

The main feature of Indian society is the joint family system. Family system is the most important in every society. Community awareness is based only on family. Family is the main source of community development and community disorder. Although the family system has changed over time, the family has occupied the most crucial position since today. The family system has a unique position in the Indian society. Family awareness is essential to understand Indian society. A joint family system in Indian society is significant. A joint family system is a key feature of the distinct Indian community. The community system is part of this family system, which plays a significant role in social life. This family system is customary in our society since today. Indian community is a rural community. Since agriculture is the main occupation, the joint family needs the most. The common residence of the joint family system consists of common crops, common property, common property, earnings, traditions, customs, habits, and heritage. In this family system, many generations of relatives live together in a single home. All members of the joint family system provide financial, social, religious, defense and entertainment facilities. Coherence, sacrifice, love, service etc. are attributed to the families of the clergy. A joint family will have access to social care for elderly, children, disabilities, widows, orphans. There have been many changes in the joint system with the arrival of the British. The main reasons for this were the changes in the family structure resulting from the impact of industrialization, labor division, modern communication media, personal freedom, modern education, economic freedom, Western lifestyle, wealth values, inheritance laws, marriage laws etc. This led to the collapse of joint families and genesis of nuclear families.

Nuclear Family

Nuclear family comprises of married couple and their children. Most of the nuclear families are established in urban areas because of industrialization. Work force from rural areas migrated to urban areas for their employment. Non-workforce like elders remains at homes in villages and becomes more vulnerable. There is no space for elders in nuclear families. This makes elders to feel lonely and isolated.

To understand the elder's problems we should understand the Religious view of elders and changes in their views.

Social isolation will affect the health, well-being and quality of life elders. These are the some steps to overcome the social isolation.

5. METHOD:

Elders care is the responsibility of community/ Government

Elders are asset of the Society; they dedicated their whole life for advancement of society. The care of elders is the prime responsibility of government in terms of financial aid and providing proper healthcare and establishment of gerontology clinics, providing proper nutrition is the responsibility of government.

Connectivity/ Communication

Young work force will migrate to other places by leaving elders at home this may cause social isolation of elders. There should be proper public transportation facilities with special facilities to elders and disabled. Travelling promotes social health. Other way of connectivity is that use of communication systems like mobile phones, video calling, letters etc.

Formation of elder's associations

Loneliness is comes from having less social relation. To eliminate the loneliness and isolation among elders there should be associations of elders. To spend their leisure time with their colleagues and friends, partners. Associations like reader's association, games, cultural activities etc.

Use of elder's services for social cause

To eliminate feeling of loneliness and isolation among elders, this is the best technique that is use of elder's services for social cause and charity is the better choice, it may strengthen their confidence and satisfaction, helps to overcome loneliness and isolation.

Promotion of cultural and religious concern

Elders seeks to live peaceful life at this stage, it is the duty of family members and government to provide facilities for spiritual and religious needs of elders. Providing free travel allowances and special care for elders is necessary. Promoting spirituality among elders helps to lead peaceful and stress less life to elders. Government should offer free access to pilgrim and nature places with free transportation. This will helps to overcome loneliness and isolation.

Implementation of new policies and more government intervention

Government should implement comprehensive policies for elders in terms of financial aid and healthcare facilities. Government should provide free nutrition however it is providing to children. Elder care should bring under the ICDS and should provide integrated care and nutrition other health care.

Establishment of new old age homes with more intensive care

Government should establish new old age homes by its own or in association with NGO's. Government should encourage establishing old age homes with Corporate social responsibility funds. Government should also encourage establishing spiritually motivated old age homes in association with major temple boards, churches, masques. It may bring spiritual peace to elders who are suffering from loneliness and isolation. Temple boards and other religious institution should spend their money for elder welfare. For this they should provide free hospitality to elders by protecting their dignity, it should not be like begging at religious institutions. It will help human well being as well as spiritual advancement and religious advancement. It will protect dignity of human being.

Promotion of elder's welfare programs in media

Today the impact of media on life of humans is most powerful, media changing the attitude of mankind. Today the impact of movies and serials on general public is most effective to change the society attitude on elder's problems is possible with media. There should be the elder friendly programs in TV's and movies it should protect the dignity of elders and it should be easily understandable to general public. Government should promote advertisement in TVs, electronic and print media. The content in TV programs should protect the dignity of elders.

Providing health care facilities

Government should provide health insurances to elders and should establish gerontology clinics. And government should provide proper facilities and care in health care centres. Health should be the primary right of every individual.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

To overcome the loneliness and isolation among elders following steps may require.

- Improved family relations and time allocation for elders is required to eliminate loneliness and isolation among elders. For this bring awareness in society may required. It is the collective responsibility of families, government and non-governmental organizations.
- To overcome loneliness and isolation it is important is to spend some time with grand children is worthy. It is the duty of parents to build relation with elders and their grand children.
- Providing basic and proper facilities for living of elders is the duty of their offspring's as well as government. Providing healthy environment is the duty of children and government.
- Government should allocate more funds to improve health care facilities, should establish elders specialty clinics. Healthcare service should be within the reach of elders. Hospitals should be fully equipped with all necessary requirements. Government should provide health insurances for elders.
- Government should increase the financial aid and other old age pensions to elders, with protection to reach the financial aid to beneficiaries directly and correctly.
- Government should encourage cultural and religious rituals to develop spirituality among elders. It works to overcome loneliness and isolation.

- Government should take necessary actions on children who are not taking care of their elders.
- Government should add elders and their requirements and problems and family values as part of curriculum up to university level.
- Government can utilize the elder's services from who are willing to do, to overcome loneliness and isolation.
- Government should provide nutrition supplements to elders to eliminate malnutrition. Government should bring awareness among public to respect elders. Government should work for improve family values.

7. CONCLUSION:

Protection of elder's rights is the prime responsibility government as well as family members. Protection of elder care by protecting their financial requirements, healthcare requirements, food needs. Respect to the dignity of elders is the responsibility of family members. Loneliness and isolation may lead to other serious health problems so to avoid the loneliness and isolation attention at elder's problems is required. Government and non-governmental organization should focus more on the elder's issues. There is the need of more researches on this issue.

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