



PSYCHO SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF INSTITUTIONALIZED SENIOR CITIZENS

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Abstract

The aging population is rapidly increasing worldwide, leading to a growing number of elderly individuals residing in institutional settings such as old age homes. This study explores the psychosocial problems faced by institutionalized senior citizens, with a focus on emotional, social and psychological well-being.

The main objective of the study is to examine the psycho social problems of the senior citizens. The study follows a descriptive research design and is based on primary data collected from 50 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from government reports, journals and official sources were also used.

The findings reveal that the regular visits from family members, relatives or friends play an important role in the psychological and emotional well-being of elderly individuals living in institutions. social interaction among inmates plays an important role in the psychosocial well-being of institutionalized senior citizens. Regular interaction with other residents may help them share experiences, develop friendships and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. family and social visits have a strong emotional and psychological significance for institutionalized elderly individuals. The majority of respondents reported that visits bring happiness and contribute to their well-being, highlighting the importance of maintaining social connections even after moving into institutional care. while a slight majority of institutionalized senior citizens perceive their mental health as satisfactory or good, a substantial proportion experience poor to very poor mental health, highlighting the psychosocial challenges associated with institutional living.

The study highlights the importance of supportive social networks, recreational activities and mental health interventions in improving the quality of life of senior citizens in institutional care. It recommends the implementation of psychosocial support programs, regular counselling services and policies that promote active aging and social inclusion. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure dignity, emotional well-being and holistic care for the elderly population.

Introduction

The global demographic landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, characterized by an unprecedented rise in the proportion of older adults. According to the World Health Organization (WHO – 2022), the number of individuals aged 60 years and older is projected to double by 2050, reaching more than 2 billion worldwide. While increased life expectancy represents a remarkable achievement of modern medicine and improved living conditions, it simultaneously presents complex challenges related to the quality of life in later years. Among these challenges, social isolation has emerged as a critical determinant of health and well-being among older adults.

Despite increasing recognition of the issue, significant gaps remain in understanding the full extent of its impact. Existing studies often focus disproportionately on mental health outcomes, leaving physical health consequences less explored. Moreover, interventions designed to address isolation have shown mixed effectiveness, often due to a lack of cultural adaptation, sustainability or scalability. Therefore, a deeper exploration into the multidimensional impact of social isolation on both mental and physical health of senior citizens is urgently needed.

Institutionalization, while often necessary to ensure safety and access to care, can further intensify the experience of social isolation among older adults. Transitioning from familiar home environments to residential care settings frequently involves the loss of personal autonomy, reduced contact with family members and disruption of long-established social networks. These changes can contribute to a range of psychosocial problems, including loneliness, depression, anxiety, feelings of abandonment and a diminished sense of purpose. The structured and at times, impersonal nature of institutional settings may also limit opportunities for meaningful social engagement, thereby exacerbating emotional distress and negatively affecting overall well-being.

In addition, the psychosocial challenges faced by institutionalized senior citizens are often shaped by cultural expectations, socioeconomic background and the quality of care provided within these facilities. In many societies, including those with strong family-oriented traditions, institutionalization may carry stigma, further impacting an individual's self-esteem and social identity. Despite these concerns, research focusing specifically on the psychosocial dimensions of institutionalized aging populations remains limited, particularly in developing country contexts. This highlights the need for systematic investigation into the nature, prevalence and determinants of psychosocial problems among

institutionalized older adults, with the aim of informing more holistic, culturally sensitive and sustainable interventions to enhance their quality of life.

Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the psycho social problems of institutionalized senior citizens. The universe of the study consists of senior citizens residing in selected old age homes within the Kannur District. The respondents were selected using the convenient sampling technique which enabled the researcher to collect data from respondents who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. The objectives of the study are to study the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents, to examine the social relationship of elderly, to identify the Physical health of elderly, to understand the mental health and emotional wellbeing of elderly, to suggest measures for improving their psychosocial well-being of elderly. The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected from 50 beneficiaries using a structured questionnaire through a convenient sampling method. While secondary data were obtained from journals, books, articles and official reports. A pilot study was conducted to ensure the reliability and feasibility of the research instruments. The collected data were systematically classified, tabulated and analysed using simple statistical tools such as percentage analysis and frequency distribution. However, the study is limited by its small sample size, restricted geographical area and dependence on respondent's perceptions.

Major Findings

The findings indicate that lack of family support is the most significant factor (36%) influencing elderly individuals to move into old age homes. This reflects the changing family structures and reduced availability of caregivers within families. The findings suggest that senior citizens from nuclear families form the largest group (60%) among institutionalized elderly. This may be due to the limited caregiving support available in smaller family structures, where adult children may be busy with work, migration or other responsibilities. The data indicates that most institutionalized senior citizens receive visits only occasionally, mainly during special days or celebrations, rather than on a regular basis. Although 24% experience regular visits, a considerable proportion of respondents either receive visits only in times of need or do not receive any visits at all. The fact that 64% receive visits suggests that many residents still have active social ties, which can help reduce loneliness, depression and feelings of abandonment. Out of the 50 institutionalized senior citizens, the largest proportion of respondents (18 individuals, 36%) reported lack of family support as the main reason for entering the institution. Out of the 50 respondents, 16 respondents (32%) reported that their relationship with family members was emotionally supportive and nurturing. 20 respondents (40%) reported that their son advised them to go to the old age home. Out of the 50 respondents, 38 respondents (76%) reported that they regularly meet or talk with other inmates in the institution. 36 % of the respondents stated that their family members visit them on special days or

occasions, such as birthdays, festivals or celebrations. Among the 50 respondents, 20 respondents (40%) stated that such visits make them happy. 40% of the respondents agreed with the statement, indicating that a considerable portion of institutionalized senior citizens experience a sense of happiness and contentment in their daily lives. 36% of respondents agreed with the statement, indicating that a considerable number of elderly individuals experience loneliness despite being surrounded by others. 40% of the respondents reported that they sometimes feel anxious or worried, indicating that occasional anxiety is common among institutionalized elderly individuals. 44% of respondents rated their mental health as good, indicating that nearly half of the residents perceive themselves as having stable and satisfactory psychological well-being. 40% of respondents reported that social isolation has significantly affected their mental health, indicating that a large portion of residents experience noticeable emotional or psychological distress due to limited social interaction.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, Old age homes should ensure inclusive care by providing facilities and opportunities for residents of different religions to practice their faiths and participate in their respective cultural and spiritual activities. Governments and communities should expand home-based care services, caregiver support programs and awareness initiatives to strengthen family support and reduce the need for institutionalization among the elderly. Strengthen family support systems by promoting community-based elder care services and encouraging greater involvement of family members in the care of senior citizens from nuclear families. Old age homes should prioritize and organize regular family and social visits to foster emotional happiness and enhance the psychological well-being of elderly residents. Programs should be developed to strengthen family bonds and provide support to caregivers, ensuring that elderly individuals receive adequate emotional, social and practical support before considering institutionalization. It is recommended that institutions offer a variety of engaging activities tailored to senior's interests to sustain and enhance their motivation, social interaction and overall psychosocial well-being.

Social Work intervention

The study emphasizes addressing the emotional, social and environmental challenges faced by institutionalized elderly individuals, particularly those arising from isolation, loss of independence and limited family interaction. Interventions begin with a comprehensive assessment to identify concerns such as depression, anxiety, loneliness and difficulties in adjustment. Social workers play a crucial role in providing both individual and group counselling to strengthen coping abilities and promote emotional well-being. They also encourage peer engagement through organized recreational and therapeutic activities. Efforts are made to rebuild and strengthen family relationships through counselling and mediation. Advocacy is an essential component, ensuring that the rights, dignity and needs of senior citizens are upheld within institutional settings. Furthermore, social workers collaborate with

multidisciplinary teams to develop individualized care plans, enhance the living environment and cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose among residents, thereby improving their overall quality of life.

Conclusion

The study examined the psychosocial problems of institutionalization on senior citizens with specific focus on family contact, social relationships, physical health and mental health and emotional well-being. The findings reveal that institutionalization, while ensuring basic care and safety, has a multifaceted impact on the lives of the elderly. With regard to family contact, the study indicates that reduced frequency of interaction with family members contributes significantly to feelings of neglect, loneliness and emotional distress among residents. Many elderly individuals expressed a sense of abandonment, highlighting the importance of sustained familial engagement even after institutionalization. The study emphasizes the need for a holistic, person-centered approach in elderly care institutions that integrates physical, social and psychological dimensions of well-being. Strengthening family involvement, promoting meaningful social interactions, ensuring comprehensive healthcare and providing mental health support are essential to improving the quality of life of institutionalized senior citizens.

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