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Issues and Challenges of Senior Citizens

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Abstract:

Due to the growth of life expectancy in recent years and low fertility rate the older population has growing significantly. Old age is associated with lots of problems. These problems have been considerably aggravated in the contemporary society due to socioeconomic transformation caused by urbanization, industrialization and disintegration of joint family system. It has been a matter of study among social scientists to find out issues and challenges faced by the senior citizens and ways and means to solve them. The problems of the aged were well before with us and they have to be dealt with carefully. The recent study 'Issues and challenges of senior citizens of urban area' was carried out taking 50 retired senior citizens, to undertake survey as per the need of the study. The respondents for study constituted only male retired senior citizens of Laxmisagar area, ward no-33, Bhubaneswar belonging to Khordha district of Odisha.

Key words: Life expectancy, urbanization, industrialization.

Introduction:

'Senior citizen' was coined for persons who were retired or on the brink of retirement, or in some cases the persons who were nearing retirement. In countries across the world, retirement ages of working citizens differ in accordance with their respective socio-cultural atmospheres in that place. This is the reason for the discrepancy in the retirement ages in different countries and also between different professionals. In some cases, retirement age is 60, while in others it is 62 or 65 etc. Various social scientists opined that the term 'old', 'senior citizen' and 'elderly' are outrageously similarly and are used interchangeably with one another. Prominent English dictionary, such as the Webster categorizes words such as senior, older, elderly in to one bracket. There is not really much of differences between these terms. Most of the developed countries have generally accepted the chronological age of 65 years as the definition of an 'older person' WHO (2009). In addition to chronological age, the age of a person can be defined by the social roles one occupies by a person's level of physical ability, as well as their chronological years, Barrett & Cantwell (2007). Mental alertness and mobility have also been considered particularly important criteria in defining an older person, Musaigen and Dsouza (2009).

The number older people or senior citizens are growing remarkably in 20th century which is known as population aging. Population aging is an obvious consequence of the demographic transition. The combination of sharp decline in fertility and increase in life expectancy leads to the increase in old population. In India also, there is a rapid increase in elderly population day by day. According to 2001 census there is 70.6 million elderly population which was 6.87 percent of the total population. In 2011 census the percentage was 8.3%. In 2013 the population of elderly was 100 million and it is projected that in 2021, the number will reach to an unbelievable 143.244 million; an increase to the tune of 103% during twenty years period.

Thus, it is matter of serious concern to understand the problems associated with the aged and their welfare. These problems are well before us in their magnitude and have to be dealt with. It has been a matter of study among the social scientists to find out the issues and challenges of senior citizens and how they overcome it. The established hypothesis permit to state that higher the socioeconomic status, and educational background, more easily they face the challenges. There is hardly any study in Odisha to reveal the position of senior citizens in urban areas which encourage the author to undertake the study in, “**Issues and challenges of senior citizens of Bhubaneswar city.**”

Objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of respondents.
2. To study the present life-style of senior citizen.
3. To find out the problems faced by the respondents in their day-today life.
4. To study the extent of sample's health status.
5. To study the measures taken by the respondents to face the problems.

Methodology:

The study was conducted in Laxmisagar area of Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha. Samples were collected from 50 senior persons who willingly cooperated. The data was collected through observation, questionnaire and personal interview method. Secondary data was collected from research publications, journals, papers, articles etc.

Results & discussions:

Objective 1: Socio-economic characteristics:-

The socio-economic characteristics studied are as follows:

Age:

Chronological age of the respondents is taken as, the age in terms of completed years.

Table – 1.1 : Distribution of respondents according to age

Sl.No.	Age (in years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	65 – 70	13	26
2	70 – 75	16	32
3	75 – 80	10	20
4	80 – 85	04	08
5	85 – 90	04	08
6	90 & above	03	06
Total		50	100

Out of 50 respondents, 13 (26%) belong to the age group of 65 to 70, 16 (32%) belongs to the age group of 70-75, 10 (20%) belongs to the age group of 75-80, 4 (8%) belongs to the age group of 80-85, 4 (8%) belongs to the age group of 85-90 and rest 3 (6%) belongs to the age group of 90 and above

Education:

The variable indicates the level up to which the individual has acquired formal and technical education.

Table – 1.2 : Distribution of respondents according to education

Sl.No.	Education achieved	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	10 th & above	10	20
2	12 th	08	16
3	Graduation	24	48
4	PG & above	06	12
5	Technical education	02	04
Total		50	100

The study reveals that, out of 50 respondents, 10 (20%) have attained education up to matric level, 8 (16%) attained up to plus two, 24 (48%) attained education up to graduation, 6 (12%) attained education up to post graduation level and 2 (4%) have attained technical education.

Marital status:

This part of the interview schedule covers the marital status of the respondents.

Table – 1.3 : Distribution of respondents according to marital status

Sl.No.	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Married	38	76
2	Un-married	02	04
3	Widower / widow	10	20
Total		50	100

Observation reveals that 38 (76%) people are married and 2 (4%) are unmarried and rest 10 (20%) are widow or widower.

Family type:

Family type was quantified by using the procedure followed by Kittur (1976). Based on the information obtained from the respondents on the type of family- joint and nuclear.

Table – 1.4 : Distribution of respondents according to type of family

Sl.No.	Age (in years)	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Nuclear	42	84
2	Joint	08	16
Total		50	100

Out of 50 respondents, 42 (84%) belong to nuclear family and 8 (16%) are living in joint families.

Family income:

The income of the respondents is a major support system in the end part of life.

Table – 1.5 : Distribution of respondents according to income

Sl.No.	Income range	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	0 – 10,000	10	20
2	10,001 – 20,000	22	44
3	20,001 – 30,000	15	30
4	30,001 & above	03	06
Total		50	100

The study reveals that, 10 (20%) are earning upto Rs. 10,000/-, 22 (44%) are earning in between Rs. 10,001/- - Rs. 20,000/-, 15 (30%) are earning in between Rs. 20,001/- - Rs. 30,000/- and 3 (6%) are earning Rs. 30,001/- and above.

Objective 2: Present life style:**Habits:**

Good habits have a positive effect on the health of an individual. So, good habit in old age is very important to remain fit and active for a longer period.

Table – 2.1 : Distribution of respondents according to routine habit

Sl. No.	Any routine habits	N = 50	%	Sl. No.	What habits	No. of respondents	%
1	Yes	35	70	1	Morning / evening walk	12	24
2	No	15	30	2	Yoga / pranayama	09	18
Total		50	100	3	Both 1& 2	14	28

Out of 50 respondents, 35 (70%) are doing various routine habits from which, 12 (24%) are doing morning/ evening walk. then, rest 15 (30%) are not doing any kind of routine habits. 9 (18%) are doing activities like yoga and pranayama and 14 (28%) are doing morning / evening walk along with yoga and pranayam.

Leisure time activities:

Spending the leisure time in a planned way is necessary for the elder people. elderly people have lots of leisure time which they should spend by doing different activities to remove the boredom of life. They should cultivate certain hobbies to spend the leisure in a fruitful way.

Table – 2.2 : Distribution of respondents according to leisure-time activities

Sl. No.	Leisure-time activities	No. of respondents	%
1	Reading books & newspaper & watching t.v	08	16
2	Reading books & newspaper & spending time with grand children	01	02
3	Reading books & newspaper & visiting friend's house	01	02
4	Reading books & newspaper & others	02	04
5	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, spending time with grand children	06	12
6	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, gardening	02	04
7	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, visiting friend's house	06	12
8	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v & others	04	08
9	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, spending time with grand children, gardening	01	02
10	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, gardening, visiting friend's house	02	04
11	Reading books & newspaper, watching t.v, visiting friend's house, others	02	04
12	watching t.v	02	04
13	watching t.v, spending time with grand children	02	04
14	watching t.v, visiting friend's house	04	08
15	watching t.v, visiting friend's house, others	03	06
16	watching t.v, spending time with grand children, visiting friend's house	01	02
17	watching t.v, gardening, visiting friend's house	01	02
18	watching t.v, spending time with grand children, visiting friend's house, gardening	01	02
19	spending time with grand children, visiting friend's house, gardening	01	02
Total		50	100

Majority of them spend their time by reading books, gardening, spending time with grand- children and also by watching t.v. some of them also visit their friends and relative's house.

Objective 3: Problems faced by senior citizens:-

Problem faced while going outside:

Elderly persons face a lot of problems while going outside. Even if they fear to go outside alone. In old age, the motor activities, vision, hearing diminishes for which they do not like to go outside.

Table – 3.1 : Distribution of respondents according to problems faced by them

Sl. No.	Problems faced	No. of respondents	%	Sl. No.	Reasons	No. of respondents	%
1	Yes	25	50	1	Heavy rush	06	12
2	No	21	42	2	Poor vision	01	02
3	Not going	04	08	3	Loss of concentration in driving	02	04
Total		50	100	4	Both 1 & 2	02	04
				5	Both 1 & 3	12	24
				6	Both 2 & 3	01	02
				7	1,2 & 3	01	02

Table - 3.1 indicates that, out of 50 respondents, 25 (50%) are facing problems due to heavy rush, poor vision, loss of concentration in driving. Then 21 (42%) are not facing any kind of problems. 4 (8%) are not doing due to immobility or lack of interest.

Objective 4: Health status:-

Old age is associated with lot of health complications. Ageing is characterized as general reduction in functional capacities, degenerating of elastic tissues of the skin resulting in wrinkling, deterioration in hearing ability and vision, decline in muscle power, bladder control, breathing problem, reduced efficiency of heart and circulation of blood, deterioration of memory and learning etc. Some elderly people suffer from chronic diseases and other major diseases like hypertension, diabetes and heart diseases.

Table – 4.1 : Distribution of respondents according to condition of health

Sl.No.	Health condition	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Good	10	20
2	Average	25	50
3	Bad	15	30
Total		50	100

Table - 4.1 indicates that, out of 50 respondents, 10 (20%) of respondents enjoy good health, 25 (50%) enjoy average health and 14 (28%) have bad health condition.

Table – 4.2 : Showing number of respondents suffering from diseases

Sl.No.	Diseases	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	39	78
2	No	11	22
Total		50	100

From the table - 4.2, out of 50 respondents, 39 (78%) are suffering from different diseases like arthritis, back problem, blood pressure, diabetes etc. and 11 (22%) are not having any kind of diseases.

Findings:

Senior citizens constitute a significant portion of the population. In each house we find one or two senior citizens. Out of total respondents, 88 percent of the senior citizens stay with their spouse and children. They are financially independent as they get pension and other benefits after retirement from service. All are health conscious as they are sufficiently educated. They take regular health checkup. In order to stay fit they follow some routine habits like morning walk and yoga. Those who stay alone are supported by relatives and neighbors. The

elderly has a great capacity and desire to adjust in their families. If they are ignored, they feel isolated within their family. All their ambitions and worries are about their family and children. Lack of money, confidence and physical strength do not permit them to go outside for a change. Number of aged spend their leisure hour by watching T.V, reading mythological books and educating their grand -children and telling them good moral stories. They are pessimistic and when they feel neglected, they wish to meet death as soon as possible.

Conclusion And Suggestions

Old age can become a problem if its management is not handled properly. There are several factors which cause these problems. If we give enough thought and equip ourselves and the society, many of the problems can be eliminated before they gain manageable proportion. The difficulty arises because of an improper socialization of young ones, the absence of right emphasis on individuality and connectedness, unavailability of role models in the family, adverse social trends and lack of concern from planners and policy makers with the problems of the aged. However, with right preparations, supportive family and friendship network, a favorable attitude towards the aged among all, adequate institutional provisions and availability of decent health care services and right confident approach to ageing among the elderlies may transform the process of ageing in to one of gratifying possibilities.

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