



Prevalence Of Depression Among Elderly Residing In Old Age Homes: A Review

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Abstract

Background: Depression is a leading cause of psychological morbidity among the elderly people residing in old age homes. With increasing global ageing and breakdown of traditional family systems, elderly individuals are facing social isolation. 14.1% elderly adult people are affected by mental disorders globally.

Method: This review aims to estimate the magnitude of depression among elderly people residing in old age homes as identified from the observational studies published between 2015 and 2025. Data were extracted on study characteristics, sample size, diagnostic tools, and prevalence of depression by searching databases including PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar.

Results: The prevalence of depression ranged from **23% to 60%**, with an average prevalence of approximately **38%** across studies. Higher prevalence was observed in low- and middle-income countries, particularly India. Key determinants included loneliness, chronic illness, functional impairment, female gender, and prolonged institutional stay. Depression among elderly residents of old age homes is highly prevalent.

Keywords: Depression, Elderly, Old Age Homes, Prevalence.

Introduction

Population ageing is a significant demographic transition worldwide. According to global estimates, the proportion of individuals aged 60 years and above is increasing rapidly, leading to a higher burden of chronic diseases and mental health disorders¹. Approximately 15-20 Lakh geriatric people stay at old age home in India as of 2024. Among all the mental disorders, depression is one of the most prevalent psychiatric conditions that affect older adults. Elderly people residing in old age homes are vulnerable to depression due to multiple factors like social isolation, loss of independence, bereavement and limited family support. Staying at old age homes often disrupts emotional and social bonds, which can negatively impact mental well-being⁶.

Studies have consistently shown that the prevalence of depression is significantly higher among institutionalized elderly compared to community-dwelling elderly populations⁵. In developing countries like India, socio-cultural transitions, urbanization, and migration have contributed to increased reliance on old age homes, further exacerbating mental health concerns among the elderly⁷.

Despite of the variability in reported prevalence due to differences in methodology, data collection tools and study populations. So, a comprehensive synthesis of available evidence is necessary based on the epidemiological research studies.

Objectives

1. To estimate the magnitude of depression among elderly individuals residing in old age homes.
2. To identify determinants and associated risk factors if mentioned in the selected study.
3. To compare findings over different geographical and socio-economic areas.

Methodology

Study Design

This review was conducted and reported using a STROBE (Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology) based framework, synthesizing findings from observational studies conducted between 2015 and 2025.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria addresses the observational studies published between 2015 and 2025. These research studies have focused on only the elderly people who reside at old age homes and that mention the prevalence of faced depression. **Exclusion Criteria** is that the studies conducted in community settings only

Search Strategy

A systematic search was conducted across the databases like PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar using keywords like “elderly depression,” “old age homes,” “prevalence,” and “geriatric mental health.”

Study Selection

A total of 52 articles were initially identified. After screening titles and abstracts, 18 articles were shortlisted. Finally, **10 studies** met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review.

Data Extraction

The following data were extracted:

- Author and year
- Country
- Study design
- Sample size
- Depression assessment tool
- Prevalence rate

Studies were evaluated based on clarity of methodology, validity of assessment tools (e.g., GDS, PHQ-9) and sample representativeness.

Result

The review included **10 observational studies** conducted across India, China, Germany, Canada, and multi-country settings. Sample sizes ranged from 80 to 28,501 participants. The most commonly used tools for assessing depression were:

- Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)
- DSM-based clinical diagnosis

Author (Year)	Country	Sample Size	Tool Used	Prevalence (%)
Ramamurthy et al. (2015)	India	100	GDS	40%
Goud & Nikhade (2015)	India	80	GDS	45%
Sanjay et al. (2017)	India	120	PHQ-9	38%
Chauhan et al. (2018)	India	150	GDS	42%
Tesky et al. (2019)	Germany	380	DSM-based	30%
Seitz et al. (2020)	Canada	200	Clinical scale	25%
Li et al. (2021)	China	500	GDS	26.9%
Verma et al. (2022)	India	110	PHQ-9	48%
Kumar et al. (2023)	India	95	GDS	52%

The prevalence of depression varied widely across studies:

- Lowest: **23–26.9%** (Li et al., 2021; Seitz et al., 2020)
- Highest: **50–60%** (Kumar et al., 2023; Verma et al., 2022)
- Average prevalence: **~38**

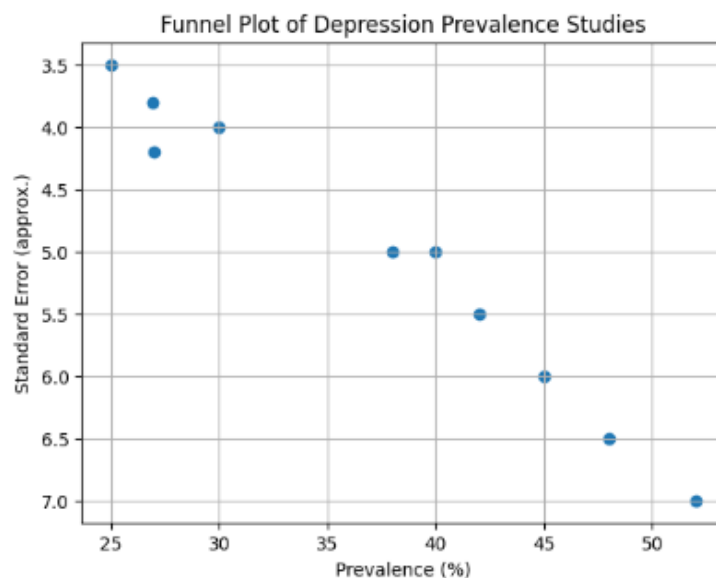


Figure1: Distribution of prevalence of Depression among elderly residing at old age home across the studies

Indian studies consistently reported higher prevalence (40–52%) compared to the Western countries (25–30%). Depression among elderly individuals residing in old age homes is impacted by the combination of social, health-related, psychological, and institutional factors. Social determinants such as loneliness, social isolation, lack of family interaction, and reduced social engagement significantly contribute to depressive symptoms, as consistently reported across studies (Wang et al., 2024). Health-related

conditions including chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension, functional disability, and cognitive impairment, further exacerbate the risk, with individuals having multiple comorbidities showing higher levels of depression (Li et al., 2021). Psychological factors such as bereavement, feelings of abandonment, and low self-esteem also play a critical role in increasing vulnerability. Additionally, institutional factors, including prolonged duration of stay in old age homes, lack of recreational activities, and poor caregiver interaction, are strongly associated with higher depression levels, with longer stays correlating directly with increased risk (Tesky et al., 2019). Subgroup analysis indicates that depression is more prevalent among females, individuals aged 75 years and above and those with long time stay at old age homes.

Discussion

This review of descriptive research studies show that depression is quite evident among elderly people living in old age homes where around 38% of residents are affected by depression, which is much higher than the 10–20% prevalence observed among the older adults living in the community areas at own home or residential places. These findings are broadly in line with earlier research (Wang et al., 2024), although studies from India often report even higher rates, likely reflecting cultural and social differences. Many older adults in India experience a sense of loneliness due to reduced contact with family along with a loss of independence as they rely more on caregivers. Ongoing health problems can further add to emotional distress and in socio-cultural context like India where family oriented care is valued. Here moving into an old age home may also bring feelings of stigma or abandonment. Strengths of this Review is inclusion of diverse geographical settings and limitation is that only cross sectional research studies are judged. Heterogeneity is observed in research tools.

Conclusion

Depression among elderly individuals residing in old age homes is a **major public health concern**, with prevalence ranging from **30% to 45%** on average. The condition is influenced by a complex interplay of social, psychological, and health-related factors.

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