



INFLUENCE OF FAMILY RELATED ISSUES ON INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SENIOR CITIZENS

¹Ms. Deena D. Souza and ²Dr. K. S. Malipatil

¹PhD Scholar, Department of Studies in Social Work, Gulbarga University, Kalburgi.

²Department of Studies in Social Work, Gulbarga University, Kalburgi.

ABSTRACT :

Introduction: Aging is a natural, inevitable and irreversible biological process. The dynamic process of development and growth begins with birth and continues till death. India is witnessing a rise in number of senior citizens. The change in family system from the traditional joint family to the nuclear family system is a primary cause of the institutionalization of senior citizens. This study aims at assessing the influence of family related issues on institutionalization of senior citizens. **Method:** A descriptive study was conducted among 300 inmates of institutions at



Mangalore, Karnataka using semi structured interview schedule. **Results:** Family related issues like having no sons (47%), preference to be independent (40.7%), desire of children to be in nuclear family (36%) and one's own illness (26%) have been found to be the most common reasons for institutionalization.

Conclusion: Need for institutionalization of senior citizens due to various reasons is rising rapidly. But the majority of senior citizens are not positive about institutional life. There is a need of social work intervention with family before institutionalizing senior citizens.

KEYWORDS : Family. Institutionalization, Senior citizens.

INTRODUCTION:

Increasing number of senior citizens is a sign of increasing demand for institutions and health care services for senior citizens. Generally, the family is the vital place for social security and emotional satisfaction for senior citizens. In developing country like India, caring of elderly is the sole responsibility of children in the family. In traditional and orthodox families, the elderly person in the family exercises the role of bread winner, and continues till the person feels capable. Once the person become physically sick, all the rights are vested in the eldest son of the family and it is his responsibility to take care of the elderly person with respect. This kind of caring is found especially in joint and extended families.

The traditional system of caring has become a serious problem in contemporary society. The factors which altered the role of elderly and care system in the present families and societies are; education, changing values, Industrialization, urbanization, globalization and better employment opportunities etc. It is found that many people are migrating to other countries, especially western countries for the sake of employment by isolating their sick and old parents. Due to this, the joint family system has started vanishing, extended family system started crumbling and nuclear family concept has become popular. A change in family structure from joint family to nuclear family has forced the senior

citizens to opt for old age homes during their late adulthood. In the present scenario, family's role as social safety for senior citizens has stated declining. The seniors who are neglected by families are more vulnerable and the lack of physiological and psychological care leads to search for new form of caring, that is institutionalization- in other words, old age homes. The majority of senior citizens does not want to live in institutions as they feel institutionalization is a symbol of rejection from family and is also considered as dumping yard where one lives till death, without doing any productive work.

A number of studies have revealed reasons for institutionalization of the elderly. The lack of care, inappropriate behavior of family members, lack of financial support, children preferring nuclear family system, insufficient housing, cited by Bharati (2009) and Lalan (2014). The reason for institutionalization increased due to transition of marriage to widowhood. Moreover the physical impairment and dementia are also considered to be the predictors for institutionalization(Hajek A, Brettschneider C, Lange C, Posselt T, Wiese B, Steinmann S, et al., 2015).GurjotKaurToor, (2014) explores the purposes behind coming to old age home ranged from dismissal by kids, disputes, inaccessibility of guardian, to no monetary help. She further reveals that the majority of the elderly had children alive; however none of them shared amiable relationship with the parents.Singh, Rakesh&MahatoSharika (2014) also found that majority of elderly were brought to the institutions because of conflicting relationships with the family members and lack of care by family and also to some extent the mental and physical illness.

Mangaluru city in Dakshina Kannada district is witnessing increasing number of institutions. Hence, an attempt was made to assess the influence of family related issues on institutionalization of senior citizens.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The present study was conducted in Mangalore city of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka state to assess the influence of family related issues on institutionalization of senior citizens. The sample comprised of 300 respondents from institutions functioning in Mangalore. Systematic sampling method was administered to select samples from each institution. Interview schedule was used to understand the influence of family related issues on institutionalization of senior citizens.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Among 300 hundred respondents 50% of respondents are female and 50% respondents are male. The majority (45.6%) of respondents belong to the age group of 70-79 years, followed by 28.7% in the age group of 80 and above and 25.7% between 60 - 69 years. The result show that senior citizens start availing institutional service after 70s.This indicates that after the retirement they try to live in the family itself. When they reach 70, they start realizing the difficulty of being alone without any care taker. So majority opt for institution after seventies.It was also observed that 40.7% of senior citizens were widows/widowers, 30% were married, 27.3% were unmarried, and only 2% were separated/divorced.

Influence of family related issues on institutionalization of senior citizens:

Causes to Institutionalization	No of respondents	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree(%)
Unfavorable behavior from immediate family members (Son, daughter-in-law, grand children)	300	59.7	14.0	8.3	15.7	2.3
Adjustment problems at home.	300	41.3	16.0	12.0	23.7	7.0
Desire of children to be in a	300	44.0	12.0	8.0	22.7	13.3

nuclear family.

Not having a Son	300	53.0	0	0	4.3	42.7
Migration of children to foreign countries	300	70.7	7.3	5.7	8.7	7.7
Due to one's own illness	300	59.7	5.7	8.7	16.3	9.7
Life threats from immediate family members.	300	73.7	9.7	11.7	3.0	2.0
Preference to be Independent	300	37.3	10.3	11.7	15.0	25.7

Table No.1: Family related cause for institutionalization – Respondents opinion

The family is the important part of every individual. Family plays a significant role in every one's life and it is the family which makes every individual a happier person. In Indian culture, senior citizens are cared for by the family during their later years of life. But unfortunately the change in family system has compelled senior citizens to adopt institutionalized life.

In this context researcher attempted to find the family related causes for their institutionalization and the data obtained is presented in Table No 1. A large no of respondents constituting 59.7% are of the opinion that unfavorable behavior from their immediate family members is not a reason to get institutionalized, as they have said that they strongly disagree with the statement that was posed to them. While 14% disagreed with the same cause, 59.7% strongly disagreed with the statement, 8.3% remain neutral. In total, a vast majority of senior citizens (74%) said that their family members' behavior is not the cause for institutionalization.

Any kind of behavior from family members towards a senior citizen can be considered as emotional, verbal abuse and in some cases even physical abuse. In this light, when the current study findings are analyzed with the report of Hindustan Times (2015) which reports that six in ten reported for abuse are abused by daughter in laws along with sons, it contradicts the findings. However, country like India is known for having families with strong family ties and it is still matter of reputation and stigma for a senior citizen to openly share that they are abused by their own children unless domestic violence case is legally registered. This could be the reason why 8.3% of respondents chose to remain neutral. Hence, researcher opines that the case studies on senior citizens can give more details on the issues related to the families. On the other hand 18% of respondents have agreed that due to misbehavior of immediate family members they chose to be institutionalized. This is supported by the study done by Akbar S, Tiwari S, Tripathi, R, Kumar A, & Pandev N (2014) that misbehavior of children is a common factor for institutionalization. Lalan Y (2014) also found that the conflict with sons and insult from sons was most stated reasons for shifting to institution.

Adjustment is mental and physical response to inner and outer demands. Inability to adjust causes mental stress. In order to avoid stress, people think of making environmental changes. Institutionalization is one option for senior citizens to lead their later years of life peacefully. The present study findings shows 30.7% of respondents agreed that because of adjustment problem they chose institution and again this is corroborated by the study done by Akbar et al (2014). Senior citizens suffer from social losses after retirement. Complete loss of the social roles makes senior citizens lonely and isolated. In addition to that, inadequate social contact from children, negligence and indifferent attitude causes emotional problems among senior citizens. All these factors compel them to move from their own nest and find a peaceful place. Moreover there were 12% respondents were in neutral side. This indicates that senior citizens neither agree nor disagree; reason could be the unwillingness to disclose the reason to a stranger and a matter of reputation. But the majority of respondents disagreed the factor as 'Adjustment problems at home' constituting 57.3% for being institutionalized.

In terms of the desire of children to be in nuclear family as a factor for institutionalization, the study result shows that about 26% senior citizens agreed as major reason for shifting to institution. When children express their desire to have nuclear family and inability to accommodate the elderly parents along with them, senior citizens take the extreme step of moving to institutions by allowing children to lead their independent family life. But large majority (56%) did not agree that the nuclear family system is a predictor for institutionalization.

The present study also shows that 47% of respondents opted for institution because of not having sons. This means either they have no sons or don't have children. In Indian tradition, parents don't stay with daughter's family. This is supported by the study done by Lalan. Y (2014) as senior citizens did not want to stay with daughters since they did not have sons, and chose institutional life. However 53% respondents strongly disagreed not having sons as a reason for being institutionalized. It indicates that having sons is not a privilege for senior citizens especially during their later years of life. Caring of elderly parents by sons has become an old tradition due to drastic change in family system.

In Indian families, there are children who would be happy to take care of parents in their later years of life. But the requirement of continuous health service for senior citizens, which cannot be provided in the family setup, forces them to seek institutional service. Pakar S R (2015) reported that the inability of family members to take care of the senior citizens in times of progressive illness compelled them to seek institutions. In this light, the present study reveals that the respondents comprising 16.3% and 9.7% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that illness is a main reason for institutionalization. The finding also correspond to previous study by Hajek A, Brettschneider C, Lange C, Posselt T, Wiese B, Steinmann S, et al (2015) as physical impairment being the main predictor for institutionalization. In addition to this, the sensory impairment is also responsible for institutionalization (Jee J, Wang JJ, Rose KA, Lindley R, Landau P, Mitchell P, 2005). In other study it was found that the higher prevalence of chronic illness and admission to hospital increases the chances of institutionalization of the senior citizens (Del Duca, Giovani Firpo, Silva Shana, Ginar da, Thumé, Elaine, Santos, Iná S, & Hallal Pedro C, 2012).

Threat from family members in terms of infliction of physical, psychological or sexual harm to senior citizens is also the predictor for institutionalization. In this context, the present study reveals that total 5% respondents with 2% strongly agree and 3% agree that the reason for institutionalization was threat from immediate family member, is supported by the study done by Govil, P. and Gupta, S. (2016), while 11.7% remain neutral. It is supported by the study of Panigrahi, Akshaya K Syamala, T S (2012) as institution as an alternative option in case of family conflict. But the vast majority (73.7%) strongly disagrees and (9.7%) disagrees with the statement. This again contradicts with the report of Hindustan Times (2015). This could be unwillingness to reveal the family matters to others and is supported by Govil, P and Gupta S. (2016) as the majority of the senior citizens in study did not want to disclose the family matters.

It is clear from the findings of present study that total 40.7% of respondents constituting 15% agree and 25.7% strongly agree that their preference to be independent as the reason for institutionalization. These senior citizens are from elite group and didn't want to have any kind of interference from close family members. But of course, the total 47.6% disagree and strongly disagree with the reason; while 11.7% were in neutral side. These are the people who belong to traditional family setup and expect to live their last years of life with their children and grandchildren.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clear that there is no single reason for institutionalization of senior citizens. All the factors are responsible for institutionalization. The transition from joint family to nuclear family has tremendously influenced the institutionalization of senior citizens. In fact, having no sons is major reason for opting institutional life. Apart from this, the misbehavior, abuse, desire of children to have nuclear family, migration of children and preference to be independent have also been found to be factors contributing to institutionalization. Understanding the factors leading to institutionalization help family members and social workers to identify when a person truly require

institutionalization. In fact, many problems which lead to institutionalization in the study could be avoided by proper intervention of the family members and senior citizens helped by social work professionals.

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