



## PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG INSTITUTIONALIZED SENIOR CITIZENS

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### ABSTRACT :

**Introduction:** Old age is the penultimate phase of human life cycle and senior citizens are more vulnerable to stress and stress related problems. The change in family system from the traditional joint family to the nuclear family is highly responsible for institutionalization of senior citizens. This study aims at assessing the perceived stress among institutionalized senior citizens. **Method:** A descriptive study was conducted among 300 inmates of institutions at Mangalore, Karnataka using interview schedule. Perceived Stress Scale -14 was administered to assess level of stress among inmates

**Results:** Found the level of stress among senior citizens was moderate to high. Statistically very high significant association was found when the stress level is compared with duration of the stay in the institution ( $P < 0.001$ ) and found the decreasing levels of stress as the years of stay increases. Furthermore a high significant association was found when age was compared with perceived stress ( $p = 0.01$ ).

**Conclusion:** Institutionalization of senior citizens has become common in contemporary society. But senior citizens in institutions are found to be experiencing stress. Hence the study strongly recommends the social work intervention in institutions to minimize the negative impacts of institutionalization on senior citizens and to improve the quality of life in institution.

**KEYWORDS :** Perceived stress, Institutionalization, Senior Citizens.

### INTRODUCTION:

The world population of senior citizens is increasing rapidly. In India also, there is rise in population of senior citizens due to tremendous advancement of science, medicine, economic wellbeing and modern health care system. The life expectancy of individual has increased and birth and death rate has decreased that ultimately resulted in growth of senior citizens population. Senior citizens globally constitutes 13% as per the estimation in 2017, comprising of 962 million people aged sixty and above. The growing rate of people aged 60 or above is 3 percent per year. Currently Europe stands first (20th) of people growth of aged sixty or above. It is estimated that in 2050 in all regions of the world excluding Africa will have more than 25 percent of population aged 60 and above. The total number of senior citizens in world population has been projected to be 1.4 billion, 2.1 billion, and 3.1 billion in 2030, 2050 and 2100 respectively. Population of senior citizens in India is growing fast and the India's current aging population is 100 million (Hindustan Times, 2018).

Generally, for senior citizens, the family is the vital place for social security and emotional satisfaction. In developing country like India, senior citizen's care is the responsibility of the younger members of the family. Due to the mobility of younger generation to urban areas and changes in family structure from joint family to nuclear family the lives of senior citizens has been affected in many ways



especially in reduced care. The traditional system of caring has become a challenge in contemporary society. The factors like education, globalization, urbanization, industrialization etc. have greatly contributed for institutionalization. Senior citizens in institutions are more vulnerable to stress for varied reasons, like lack of family support, separation and loneliness all causing stress (Mani. G. et al, 2014). The effects of stress at various stages of life are burdens to all individuals, especially senior citizens in institutions. One of the effects may be that, stresses will gradually breakdown body's natural defense system and will have effect on the body and mind of individuals.

Senior citizens in institutions experience high psychosocial problems than in community setting along with families (Singh R et.al, 2013) and Karpagavalli Nageswaran & Suresh Ray (2016), It has been revealed that senior citizens in institution experience higher levels of stress than non-institutionalized senior citizens. Jega Juliet & Appavu S. (2011) explored that the senior citizens in the institutions experience moderate to mild levels of stress which constitutes 88% and 12% respectively. But, Mani G, Udayakumar S, Annamalai K, Ramasamy D J (2014) found High stress (18%) among senior citizens in institutions and nearly 60% of the senior citizens with moderate stress. Only 22% of the participants had low stress scores. Hence close to 80% of inmates suffer from moderate or high levels of stress.

#### METHODOLOGY:

The descriptive study was conducted in Mangalore city of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka state to assess the stress among institutionalized senior citizens. The sample comprised of 300 respondents from institutions of Mangalore city. Sample was selected using systematic sampling method. The Socio demographic data was collected using socio demographic data sheet. In order to assess level of stress, the Perceived stress scale (PSS) of Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983) was administered. The primary data collected were analyzed using SPSS. Chi-Square test was done to analyze significant association with the subgroups.

#### RESULTS:

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 years and 60 - 69 years with 25.7%. The result shows 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 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

**Table No 1: Level of stress among institutionalized senior citizens**

Stress level	Frequency	Percent
Low	21	7.0
Moderate	250	83.3
High	29	9.7
Total	300	100.00

The above table shows that maximum number of senior citizens experience moderate level of stress which constitutes 83.3% and 9.7% of respondents have high level of stress which cannot be ignored. Low level of stress is experienced by very small number of respondents that comprises of 7%.

**Table No 2: Gender wise distribution of Stress level of the respondents**

Level of stress	Male	Female	Total
Low	13 (8.7%)	8 (5.3%)	21 (7%)
Moderate	121(80.7%)	129(86%)	250 (83.3%)
High	16(10.7%)	13(8.7%)	29(9.7%)
Total	150(100%)	150(100%)	300(100%)
X <sup>2</sup> =1.757 p=0.4145 ns			

The above distribution of data shows that 86% of the female had moderate stress and 80.7% of the male respondents had moderate stress. No significant association was found when the perceived stress was correlated with gender of the respondents. However, it was noticed that higher number of male respondents (10.7%), had higher level of stress than the female respondents (8.7%). Among those who had higher level of stress, male respondents were more comprising of 10.7%, and also when compared among those having moderate stress level, female respondents were higher in number (86%)

**Table No 3: Age wise distribution of the respondent with the Stress level**

Level of stress	age of the respondent			Total
	60 -69	70 - 79	>=80	
Low	3(3.9%)	8(5.8%)	10(11.6%)	21(7.0%)
Moderate	64(83.1%)	111(81.0%)	75(87.2%)	250(83.3%)
High	10(13.0%)	18(13.1%)	1(1.2%)	29(9.7%)
Total	77(100.0%)	137(100.0%)	86(100.0%)	300(100.0%)
X <sup>2</sup> =13.218 p=0.01 hs				

High significant (p=0.01) association was seen in the above table when the level of perceived stress was compared with the age of the respondents. When analyzing, it was found that those respondents who are aged above 80years, were more in number who had lower to moderate level of perceived stress (11.6%& 87.2% respectively).However, when comparing the respondents who had perceived high level of stress, those aging from 60 to 79 years had minimal differences.

**Table No 4: Distribution of Stress level with the type of Institution respondents are registered**

Level of stress	Type of Institution				Total
	Free	Paid	Partially paid	Private	
Low	4(4.2%)	7(6.7%)	1(2.3%)	9(16.1%)	21 (7%)
Moderate	83(86.5%)	90(86.5%)	38(86.4%)	39(69.6%)	250 (83.3%)
High	9(9.4%)	7(6.7%)	5(11.4%)	8(14.3%)	29(9.7%)
Total	96 (100%)	104 (100%)	44(100%)	56(100%)	300(100%)
X <sup>2</sup> =12.951 p=0.044 sig					

Significant difference is found when comparing the type of institution the respondents are registered with as regards their level of stress. Those respondents having lower stress majority are from Private institution (16.1%). The above table clearly depicts that the elderly who belong to free, paid and partially paid institutions are experiencing moderate to high level stress. However, respondents who belong to private institution showed moderate to lower level of stress.

**Table no 5: Distribution of Stress level with the type of admission**

Level of stress	Type of admission to the institution					Total
	Family members	Neighbors	club	Charity association	Self	
Low	10(5.3%)	1(3.4%)	0(0.0%)	2(6.9%)	8(17.8%)	21 (7%)
Moderate	164(86.3%)	26(89.7%)	5(71.4%)	22 (75.9%)	33(73.3%)	250(83.3%)
High	16 (8.4%)	2(6.9%)	2(28.6%)	5(17.2%)	4(8.9%)	29(9.7%)
Total	190 (100%)	29(100%)	7(100%)	56(100%)	45(100%)	300(100%)
X <sup>2</sup> =15.367 p=0.05 sig						

Significant association (p=0.05) was found when the stress level of the respondents was compared with the type of admission. Majority of the respondents (86.3%) were found whose family members admitted the respondents to the institution are having moderate level stress. However, 8.4% also demonstrated higher levels of stress. It is interesting to note that those who have opted institutional life by their own wish also experienced moderate level of stress, which constitutes (73.3%). In fact, lower stress level was found to be high among people who opted institutionalized life (17.8%) compared to other types of admission to the institution.

**Table No 6: Stress level with the duration of stay in the institution**

Level of stress	Duration of stay in the Institution (years)				Total
	1-5	5-10	10-15	>=15	
Low	10(6.1%)	5(5.1%)	2(6.7%)	4(44.4%)	21 (7%)
Moderate	139(85.3%)	83(84.7%)	23(76.7%)	5 (55.6%)	250(83.3%)
High	14 (8.6%)	10(10.2%)	5(16.7%)	0(0%)	29(9.7%)
Total	163 (100%)	98(100%)	30(100%)	9(100%)	300(100%)
X <sup>2</sup> =22.415 p=0.001 VHS					

Duration of the stay of the respondents in the Institution makes varied change in the behavior of the inmates, which may influence their mental health status. In the present study, we can find that Very High Significant (p=0.001) result was found when the duration of stay and the level of stress was compared. It was seen that majority of the respondents (85.3%) were found to have Moderate level of stress where duration of stay in the Institution was 1 to 5 years. It was also noted that there was comparative decrease in stress in the number of respondents (55.6%) as the period of stay increased. It could be interpreted that as the adjustment of the respondents to the institution environment increases they manage their mental health.

**DISCUSSION**

The researcher had framed a concept in the present research to find the impact of stress on the life of the Institutionalized Senior Citizens. Hence with the help of Perceived stress scale (PSS), the researcher explored the perceived stress level among the respondents. This scale assesses the degree to which people perceive their lives as stressful. It shows that how often the respondents have found

their lives unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloaded in the last month. It was very important to study the stress level of the senior citizens in order to ensure them quality life even after their admission in the institution. Study conducted by Aggarwal, N. T., Wilson, R. S., Beck, T. L., Rajan, K. B., Mendes de Leon, C. F., Evans, D. A., & Everson-Rose, S. A. (2013) stressed that Chronic stress may worsen the memory function and may cause neuropsychiatric problems.

The perceived stress of the respondents when analyzed was understood that 83.3% of them had moderate stress, 9.7% had high stress and only 7% had lower level of stress. Hence this study reveals that 93% of the respondents had stress. One of the study conducted by Abd-Allah ES, Ahmed RAR, Ahmed FM (2017) found that about two-thirds of the retired employees in the study sample was highly stressed and had a high total stress assessment. A slight lower percentage of 60.6% was found of the elders having moderate stress level. This trend was also reported by Singh R et al (2013). Dar, S.A., Ilyas, I., Dilawar, T., Rahman, T. (2018) which explored that 77% of respondents was with no pressure. However, another study conducted by Mani G, Udayakumar S, Annamalai K & Ramasamy D, (2014), reported that citizens in institutions experience moderate to high levels of stress. Similarly, the present study also shows greater percentage of respondents having moderate to high levels of stress, and again it is supported by other studies, who found that the respondents in the institutions have stress. Article published by Brown and Harris, 1978; Krueger et al' 1972, Jega Juliet & Appavu S. (2011) explored that the stress level of senior citizens in the institutions and families showed that 88 percent of senior citizens had moderate level of stress and 12 percent had a mild stress level. But those respondents living with the family estimated that 84 % of respondents had mild stress and 16 % had moderate level of stress. Paul Anita (2015) also reveals in the study conducted at selected old age homes of Kolkata that 78% had moderate stress level but found 15% of respondents with high level of stress.

The results of the present study showed that more number of female respondents (86%) were having moderate stress level than the male respondents (80.7%). However, when it comes to the higher level of stress, 10.7% of the males, and 8.7% of the female members had higher level of stress. Stress is due to various reasons, may be due to rigid policy of the Institution, dependency on the management of the institutions, lack of freedom, fear of ageing and ill-health, emotional problem due to rejection from the family, grief from loss of loved ones or friends etc. Hence, in order to understand the cause of the stress, various variables are associated. When the age distribution of the respondents were associated it was seen that high significant association was found ( $p=0.01$ ). Among the three age groups, the perceived moderate stress was seen more among those aged 80 years and above. The highlighting fact was that in this age group few (1.2%) had higher level of stress. With minimal difference, respondents having higher level of stress were 13% in the age group of 60-69 and 13.1% in the age group of 70-79 years. Also comparatively more number of respondents (11.6%) in the age group of 80 and above, had lower stress level. This result highlights that as age increases the higher level of stress reduces. Adjustment with the life situation may be one of the reasons for this result. . But this contradicts with the study of Almira Osmanovic-Thunström, Enrico Mossello, Torbjörn Åkerstedt, Laura Fratiglioni, Hui-Xin Wang (2015) where the findings of study revealed that as age increases the stress level also increases.

## CONCLUSION:

The perceived stress was moderate to high among institutionalized senior citizens. Perceived stress was associated closely with age and duration of stay in the institution. Study clearly indicates that stress level decreases when senior citizens get adjusted to institutional environment. However, in initial stages of institutionalization senior citizens experience moderate to high levels of stress. Hence, the utmost priority should be given at initial stage of institutionalization by professional social workers to reduce the burden of stress and to accept the new form of life in institutions. It is been found that, many institutions have not employed professional social workers. For this reason, the study strongly recommends social work intervention in institutions especially by geriatric social workers to make life of senior citizens more happy and enjoyable.

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