

Rights of the Elderly: Awareness Study among Elderly

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: A report jointly brought out by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Help Age International said that India's population is likely to increase by 60 per cent between 2000 and 2050. India has around 100 million elderly at present and the number is expected to increase to 323 million by 2050. It's only recently that the changes in overall demography have been influential in a renewed interest in older persons' human rights. It is now recognised that this new demographic wave will convert many aspects of society and cause new economic and social challenges. Better medical facilities, care and liberal family planning policies made the elderly the fastest growing section of the society in India.

But how far does this statement stand true. Are all elderly aware and avail the provisions implemented for their welfare? There is a need to know the awareness regarding the human rights and facilities available for the elderly citizen in India, so that measures are taken to improve the knowledge of the elderly people in this matter. A study was, hence, conducted with the objective to know the awareness among the people aged 55 years and above in and around Mangalore of Karnataka state of India regarding the various programmes and provisions provided by the Government of India for the welfare of the Senior citizens.

Methodology: The research design adopted in this study was Descriptive. The respondents were selected through accidental sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire from 385 respondents after which it was analysed using frequency and percentage and inferential method such as chi square test.

Results and Conclusion: The study showed that 57% of the respondents had moderate level of awareness regarding benefits & provisions for elderly and 39% of the respondent's level of awareness was poor. The study showed that there is low awareness regarding the various health and welfare provisions that are provided for the elderly population. This may result in decrease in the health status of the elderly people and also reduce their quality of life. Hence there is an urgent need to undertake actions in order to spread awareness regarding the availability of various healthcare provisions in favour of the elderly people and also to enhance awareness of Human Rights among elderly people.

Key Words: Elderly, Rights, Awareness

INTRODUCTION

While 21st century is widely being considered as the century of elderly population, the 22nd century is anticipated to be the century of the 'ageing of the aged'. India too has been hit with the global sensation of population aging.^[1] The

Population Census of 2011 reports that in India there are approximately 104 million elderly persons (aged 60 years or above) out of which 53 million are females and males are 51 million.^[2]

According to a joint report by Help Age International and United Nations

Population Fund India's population is anticipated to increase by 60 per cent between 2000 and 2050. But the elderly population, the ones above 60 years, will soar up by 360 per cent. At present in India there are around 100 million elderly and it is anticipated that this number will increase to 323 million, comprising of 20 per cent of the total population by 2050.^[3]

It's only recently that the changes in overall demography have been influential in a renewed interest in older persons' human rights. It is now recognised that this new demographic wave will convert many aspects of society and cause new economic and social challenges. Today we find there are a lot of violations of human rights in the world in a varied number of areas. As attention is given to reducing discrimination and giving protection to the various disadvantaged groups, certain categories get more priority such as women, children, and people with disabilities. Though traditionally a few policies and benefits were provided for older persons, they were not considered as a group requiring special attention. Now new demography has highlighted the discrimination & abuse against older persons as well making more vocal about their rights.^[4]

The elderly face different types of abuse such as emotional/ physical/ sexual/ financial, neglect abandonment, confinement & wilful deprivation.^[5] It is also seen that older person face a number of disabling diseases due to their age & also does not have access to proper healthcare, medicines. Initially it was in the developed countries that the aspect of elder abuse was exposed. Over time, research in various developing countries too has highlighted the existence of elder abuse. There are harmful consequences to society due to this abuse. It leads to increased hospitalization which means higher public health expenditure, more resources, involvement of civic bodies etc.

The traditional system of fixing an age for retirement developed the concept that a person becomes old at that particular

time irrespective of his actual abilities. In spite of its good intention this has led to age discrimination in society & financial dependence of the elderly. It has led to a social problem, a separation of aged from non aged, leading to the perception among people that segregates aged from rest of the society as non-productive.^[6] There is a need to change this impression and one way is to draw attention about elder's rights as this will raise the profile of their issues.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As indicated by various population projections in the future there is definitely a significant increase in the elderly population. This indicates a large quantum of healthcare required to meet the health needs of the elderly. But studies conducted in developing countries regarding geriatric healthcare indicate an insufficient structure to meet the diverse needs of the elderly. A study conducted to identify the challenges of elderly care in Iran identified inadequacies in the infrastructures that include physical, human, and informational as well as resources required for providing proper care for the elderly at all levels of the system.^[7] Studies conducted in Argentina reveal lack of nationwide coverage of healthcare systems for the elderly, relatively underdeveloped rehabilitation and long-term care services.^[8] A study in Nigeria uncovered an inadequately funded healthcare system which gives very little importance on the care of older people.^[9]

In India though progress has been made in the last few years in healthcare, geriatric care is still lagging behind. However, there is a little progress made due to increasing awareness of policy makers to multiple issues related to aging. Recently training programs in geriatric care have just begun. There are provisions like income tax rebate for elderly, old age pension scheme, day care centers and old homes and law to help retired etc. but as in European countries the environment is not as elderly-friendly.^[10]

A study by Agewell foundation revealed that 23.3 percent of senior citizens were found living in pitiable conditions, every third senior citizen in the country is not getting the proper medicine health care facility, nearly 48.6 percent of the elderly are also not getting respect by their family members, relatives or the society, cases of elder abuse are on rise in urban areas in comparison to rural.

In order to manage the expected increase in the elderly population and reduce the dependency ratio the Government of India has implemented many acts and provisions. They have also formulated a National program for the health-care for the elderly. The policy makers, planners and decision makers have formed bodies and made provisions for the benefit of the elderly population, which will act as a solution to the commonly faced problems of the elderly such as economic problems, health and nutritional welfare, psycho-socio problems etc.

But the facilities available under the acts and provisions formed for the senior citizen will be beneficial only when they have access to such information. Merely forming acts for the welfare of the citizens will not help in achieving the set target. Awareness of such rights, acts and provisions that are implemented for the welfare of the citizen, among the elderly people acts as a key factor in the achievement of the set objectives. The Agewell study has shown that in India 85.9% of the elderly have never heard of rights been formulated exclusively for them, it was a new term for them. Illiteracy, poverty are one of the reasons for this. This has been proved by a study undertaken by Vauclair & team that older people were perceived more positively, the more a country was modern and the higher was the employment rate of older people. [11] Hence in our country this lack of awareness among the older persons has contributed to increased violations of their human rights and prevalence of discrimination, mistreatment and abuse. But their cry for

help is hardly heard, it remains within four walls.

According to 2011 census, Karnataka had 8.4%, 60 plus aged population and stood 6th in India in terms of percentage of old age population. [12] In a study quoted by Rekha, State Head for Karnataka, Help Age India, which covered 24 cities in 20 states, 35% of the people surveyed in Karnataka said they had been abused. Mangalore was ranked 13th among all the city's surveyed with regard to number of abused elderly people. [13] Even though Mangalore has been considered as the hub of education, it has such a high incidence of elderly abuse. The present study was undertaken to throw some light on the awareness level of the elderly regarding their own rights & provisions made for them.

Objective Of The Study

A study was conducted to with the objective to know the awareness of the basic human rights and provisions that are implemented for the welfare of the elderly population, among the people aged 55years and above.

METHODOLOGY

The study population was the people aged 55years and above in and around Mangalore of Karnataka state of India. A sample of size 385 was included in the study based on the formula $n = \frac{z_{\alpha}^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$, assuming p= 50%, confidence interval 95% and 5% allowable error. The respondents were selected through accidental sampling technique, where in researcher collected the data from elderly whomever she could meet during the data collection period.

The research design adopted in this study was Descriptive. Structured questionnaire was used to measure the variables. It consisted of 2 sections: section 1 which dealt with demographic data, section 2 - awareness of old age government benefit schemes, legal provisions, travel benefits, health and welfare provisions

Collected data was analysed by descriptive statistical methods such as frequency and

percentage and inferential method such as chi square test. Analysis was performed by SPSS 23.

RESULTS

The questionnaire was given to the elderly in Mangalore city to assess their

awareness regarding their rights. The results of the study are described under 2 sections such as; Demographic profile of respondents and Awareness regarding old age schemes & provisions for the elderly in Mangalore.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of respondents

Details	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age	55-59	65	17%
	60-64	160	42%
	65-69	105	27%
	>70	55	14%
Gender	Female	210	55%
	Male	175	45%
Educational qualification	< SSLC	115	29.9%
	SSLC	65	16.9%
	PUC	60	15.6%
	Graduate	90	23.4%
	Post graduate	10	2.6 %
	Nil	45	11.7%
Marital status	Unmarried	280	2.6%
	Divorced	85	2.6%
	Widow/ widower	10	22.1%
	Married	10	72.7%
No of children	Nil	45	12%
	1	55	14%
	2-4	225	58%
	5 & above	60	16%

Data shows that majority of the respondents ie. 42% are in the age group 60-64 years, 27% are in the age group 65-69 years, 14% are in the age group 70 years and above and 17% of the respondents are from age group 55-59 years. Majority of the respondents (55%) are female. Regarding education, 29.9% of the respondents have not completed their SSLC, 23.4% of the respondents have completed their undergraduate degree, 16.9% have completed SSLC and 15.6% their PUC. 2.6

% of the respondents are postgraduates and 11.7% of the respondents were illiterate. Marital status of the respondents shows that 72.7% are married, 22.1% are widow/ widower, 2.6% are divorced and percentage of unmarried people is 2.6%. Majority of the respondents (58%) have 2-4 children, 16% of the respondents have children 5 and above, 14% of the respondents have only 1 child and 12% of the respondents do not have children.

Table 2: Other details of the respondents

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Employment status	Working	95 24.7
	Unemployed	290 75.3
Reason for quitting the job	Retired	214 55.6
	VRS due to health issues	68 17.7
What age did you quit your job	inability to work	103 26.7
	55-59years	195 50.7
	60-64 years	145 37.7
Lack of employment has effected your income harshly	65-69 years	45 11.6
	yes	147 38.2
	no	167 43.6
Economically insecure due to loss of employment	maybe	70 18.2
	yes	168 43.6
	no	132 34.3
Dependent on your children for economic support	maybe	85 22.1
	yes	155 40.3
	no	155 46.7
	maybe	50 13.0

Table 2 shows 75.3% of the respondents are not working. Majority of the respondents (55.6%) stated reason for not working as being retired and 17.7% respondents have taken VRS due to health issues & 26.7% respondents have quit their jobs due to their inability to work. 50.7% quit their job

between 55-59 years of age. 43.6% respondents feel that lack of employment has not affected their income harshly. 43.6% respondents feel economically insecure due to loss of employment. 40.3% respondents are dependent on their children for economic support.

Table 3: Respondents availing benefit schemes

Particulars		No. of respondents	Percentage
Registered under government old age benefit schemes	yes	85	22.1
	no	240	62.3
	NA	60	15.6
Receive benefits from the schemes	regularly	55	14.3
	sometimes	20	5.2
	never	10	2.6
	NA	300	77.9

Table 3 shows that only 22% respondents have applied for the old age benefit schemes provided by the government. Out of 85 respondents who have applied for the schemes 55 people are receiving the benefits regularly.

Table 4: Awareness regarding benefits & provisions for elderly

	No. of respondents	Percentage
Awareness of old age (government) benefit schemes		
Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)	130	33.8
The Unorganized Worker's Social Security Act, 2008	110	28.6
Post Retirement Benefits For Employees of Central Government	30	7.8
National Pension System	15	3.9
Atal Pension Yojana Scheme	5	1.3
Central Sector Scheme of Integrated programme for Older Persons (IPOP)	10	2.6
Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)	130	33.8
Not aware of any	85	22.1
Awareness of legal acts and provisions under the court of law for senior citizens		
Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956	150	39.0
Childless senior citizens - Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007	110	28.6
Maximum amount which may be ordered for maintenance of a senior citizen - Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007	85	22.1
The Muslim Law	130	33.8
Christian and Parsi community – CPC code	115	29.9
Monthly allowance - Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007	150	39.0
Awareness of the benefits for senior citizen under the Indian Transport facilities		
Two seats for senior citizens in front row of the buses	255	66.2
Indian railway provides 40% concession for males over 60 years and 50% for females	180	46.8
Separate counters for senior citizens for purchase/ booking/ cancellation of tickets	210	54.5
Wheel chairs are available at all junctions and other important railway stations	185	48.1
Indian airlines provides 50% senior citizen discount	170	44.2
Provision to allot lower berth to the senior citizens in the Indian railways	215	55.8
Awareness regarding health and welfare provisions		
Separate geriatric ward for elderly patients in district hospital	70	18.2
Separate queues for elderly persons in hospitals for registration and clinical examination	180	46.8
Pensioners of central government offices the facility to obtain medicines for chronic ailments up to 3 months under central government health scheme	80	20.8
Issue food items from the ration shop at subsidised rates of Rs.3/ kg for rice and Rs. 2/ kg for wheat	75	19.5
Persons aged 60 and above are given priority for identification at the ration shop	125	32.5
Annapoorna Scheme being implemented by the States Administration, 10 kgs. of food grains	75	19.5
Know about welfare programs from NGOs like Agewell Foundation, Helpage	90	23.4

Table 5: Overall level of Awareness

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	150	39.0
Moderate	220	57.1
High	15	3.9
Total	385	100.0

Overall level of awareness was measured by obtaining cumulative score for each respondent. Total score ranges from 0 to 32 and divided the range with equal width to categorise the respondents; having poor,

moderate and high awareness. Table 5 shows that majority (57%) of the respondents had moderate level of

awareness regarding benefits & provisions for elderly and 39% level respondent's level of awareness was poor.

Table 6: Association of level of awareness with age, gender, place and education level of the respondents

		Awareness						Total		p value
		Poor		Moderate		High				
		Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	
age	55-59	15	23.1%	50	76.9%	0	.0%	65	100.0%	.000, HS
	60-64	55	34.4%	100	62.5%	5	3.1%	160	100.0%	
	65-69	65	61.9%	40	38.1%	0	.0%	105	100.0%	
	70 and above	15	27.3%	30	54.5%	10	18.2%	55	100.0%	
gender	female	95	45.2%	110	52.4%	5	2.4%	210	100.0%	.010, sig
	male	55	31.4%	110	62.9%	10	5.7%	175	100.0%	
place	rural	15	13.0%	95	82.6%	5	4.3%	115	100.0%	.000, HS
	urban	135	50.0%	125	46.3%	10	3.7%	270	100.0%	
education	below SSLC	40	34.8%	75	65.2%	0	.0%	115	100.0%	.000, HS
	SSLC	15	23.1%	50	76.9%	0	.0%	65	100.0%	
	PUC	15	25.0%	35	58.3%	10	16.7%	60	100.0%	
	degree	35	38.9%	55	61.1%	0	.0%	90	100.0%	
	PG	5	50.0%	0	.0%	5	50.0%	10	100.0%	
	nil	40	88.9%	5	11.1%	0	.0%	45	100.0%	

Association of level of awareness with age is highly significant which shows that overall awareness is moderate and decreases as age increases. People in the age of 55-59yrs have greater awareness about the benefits & provisions for elderly than the other age groups. This may be mainly because of the fact that people of this age group are more concerned and interested regarding the benefits available to the older people as they are moving towards this age group. Association of level of awareness with gender is significant which shows that awareness is more among males than female. It indicates that male respondents have greater awareness about the benefits & provisions for elderly than female.

Association of level of awareness with geographic place is highly significant which shows that awareness is moderate and more among rural respondents than urban.

Association of level of awareness with level of education is highly significant which shows that awareness is moderate and is decreasing as the education level is increasing. Half of the Postgraduates had poor and other half high awareness.

33.8% of respondents were aware of Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme & Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) followed by 28.6% about benefits under the Unorganized

Worker's Social Security Act, 2008 and 22% respondents were not aware of any of the above listed schemes.

Regarding awareness of legal acts and provisions under the court of law for senior citizens, 39% of the respondents are aware (61% not aware) of the provisions under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 for the elderly people. 28.6% of the respondents are aware (71.4% are not aware) of the provisions for Childless senior citizens under Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007. 22.1% of the respondents are aware (77.9% are not aware) of the Maximum amount which may be ordered for maintenance of a senior citizen under the Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007. The percentage of awareness of the Muslim law and CPC code for the Christian and Parsi community is only 33.8% and 29.9 % respectively. Only 30% of the respondents were aware that Monthly allowance should be provided to the parents by their children under the Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, 2007.

Regarding awareness of the benefits for senior citizen under the Indian Transport facilities; 66.2% of the respondents are aware of the seats allotted for senior citizen in the buses, 54.5% of the respondents are aware regarding the separate counters

available for senior citizens for ticket booking and 55.8% of the respondents are aware that there is provision to allot lower berth to the senior citizens in the Indian railways. The table also shows that only 46.8% of the respondents are aware about the concessions on the train ticket fare for senior citizen, 48.1 % of the respondents are aware that wheel chairs are available at all junctions and other important railway stations and only 44.2% of the respondents were aware that Indian airlines provides 50% senior citizen discount on economy tickets for domestic flights.

Regarding awareness of health & welfare facilities for senior citizens, only 18% are aware of separate geriatric ward for elderly patients in district hospital. 46.8% are aware of separate queues for elderly persons in hospitals for registration and clinical examination. 20.8% are aware that central government pensioners can obtain medicines for chronic ailments up to 3 months under central government health scheme. 19.5% know that seniors can be issued food items at the ration shop at subsidised rates of Rs.3/ kg for rice and Rs. 2/ kg for wheat. 32.5% aware that persons above 60 are given priority for identification at the ration shop & only 19.5% aware of Annapoorna Scheme. 23.4% know about welfare programs from NGOs.

DISCUSSION

The study result showed that there is moderate awareness regarding the various benefits and provisions for the elderly population. Throughout the study the highest awareness (66.2%) was seen regarding the reservation of two seats on the front row in the buses. There was least awareness regarding the government benefit schemes like Atal Pension Yojana Scheme (1.3%), Central Sector Scheme of Integrated programme for Older Persons (IPOP) (2.6%), and National Pension System (3.9%). A study reviewed by the author showed that among 385 elderly respondents, 40.39% said that they have no idea about the financial schemes being run by the

government, 23.34% respondents agreed that they are aware of the financial schemes while 37.27% of the respondents agreed that they are aware of the financial schemes provided by the government but to some extent only.^[14]

The study also revealed that out of 15000 elderly 24.16% respondents claimed that they have good awareness about legal provisions made in favour of older people, 28.58% respondents said that they have limited awareness while approximately a half respondents (47.26%) answered in negative when they were asked whether they are aware of elderly friendly legal provisions made in the country. When comparing to the current study it was seen that less than 50% of the respondents were aware of the different legal acts and provisions under the court of law for the senior citizens like the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance act, Maintenance & welfare of parents & senior citizens act, The Muslim Law, the Christian and Parsi community law etc.

This unawareness has led to inhumane living condition of the elderly people. Another parameter is the high level of patience and tolerance of the Indian parents towards their children. This has led to the increasing rate of elderly abuse. Even though these cases are increasing there are no proportional cases filed against it. This is mainly because of the social stigma of “what will the society say?” People are willing to become a prey to such abuse within the four walls of the house but don't want to fight against it thinking of the humiliation and shame that they will have to face from the society if they revert back against these abuses.

This mentality can be changed only with increased awareness regarding this issue which will not only give the victims awareness regarding their rights but also will let them know that they are not alone in this fight. They don't have to bear the pain in silence. They will have the support and encouragement of other people who are fellow victims like them and also the

support of the NGO's and self-help bodies that are fighting against such cause. This will in turn give them the required mental strength and motivation to come out of such abuse and raise their voice against it.

The current study showed that respondent's awareness regarding the various benefits provided for senior citizen under the Indian transport facilities was around 50%. 66% of the respondents were aware that two seats are reserved for senior citizens in the front row of the buses as the same is visually displayed in the bus. Around 50% of the respondents were aware of the concessions and allotment of lower berth to the senior citizens, availability of wheel chairs at junctions and important stations under Indian railways. This is mainly because of the information regarding the same is provided at information desk in the railway station and also in the IRCTC website.

More information should be given to the people regarding the seat allotment and different provisions for the elderly people under various transport facilities. This will make the travel journey of the elderly people more comfortable and it will also give a sense of independence to them when it comes to travelling. The younger generation should be motivated to give up their seats or at least the seats that is reserved for the senior citizens which are occupied by others.

The health and welfare provisions for the senior citizens provide various healthcare facilities which help them to be less dependent on their family members. This will in turn help them to improve their health and social status. But this study showed that there is low awareness regarding the various health and welfare provisions that are provided for the elderly population. This may result in decrease in the health status of the elderly people and also reduce their quality of life. Hence there is an urgent need to undertake actions in order to spread awareness regarding the availability of various healthcare provisions in favour of the elderly people. Along with

the awareness activities measures should be taken in order to make these facilities easily accessible to all the elderly people.

Limitation of the Study

The respondents of the study belonged to and around Mangalore city. Hence the results derived are also dependent on the availability and accessibility of the various facilities and provisions levied for the welfare of the elderly population.

CONCLUSION

It's seen that the elderly populations are subjected to physical and mental negligence, denial of basic needs and lower social status. Hence in order to improve the quality of living of the elderly people the government and also other organizations have undertaken measures and provisions. But this can be optimally utilized only if the elderly populations are aware of their basic rights and the facilities and provisions that is levied for their welfare. The present study showed that there is a moderate awareness regarding the basic human rights and provisions that are implemented for the welfare of the elderly population. This can be changed through media, celebrating 'International day of elderly persons' and by conducting awareness programmes regarding the welfare facilities for the elderly people. Now the focus should be shifted to the younger generation by sensitizing them about the problems faced by the older generation and supplying them with the necessary information regarding the provisions and facilities available. This will motivate them to involve themselves in helping the older people and drive them to make a significant contribution towards the life of the elderly people.

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