



THE PLIGHT OF THE OLDER PERSONS IN OLD AGE HOMES – INDIA & BANGLADESH

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Abstract : Nowadays ageing population is one of the biggest problems Worldwide . Due to Urbanization and Industrialization the family members are going outside (even abroad) for better jobs. Factors like urbanization technological progress and migration joint family structure . These are affecting not only the joint family structure but also the close -knit interpersonal relationship. So, the family institutions are breaking up into nuclear families . Thus elderly people are either left at home without support such as lack of proper food , lack of proper shelter , lack of family care etc. or are not being looked after properly. They are forced to stay at old age homes . This causes elderly people to suffer from psycho- social problems at the old age homes such as lack of emotional support , lack of family support loneliness , low self -esteem , lack of social security . Added to this is a severe financial crunch . Thus , in this context the researcher is attempting to understand the issues and problems confronting the elderly in old age homes in India & Bangladesh with reference to Kolkata and Dhaka respectively because ageing is becoming an emerging issue in both this countries.

Keywords: Old Age Homes , Older Persons & Plight

Introduction :

The term ‘elderly’ is also referred to as old age that simply denotes the process of ageing or growing older . This is a natural concomitant of the unstoppable passage of years. It marks the end of life cycle (Gorman ,1999). Though , there is no universally accepted definition of the elderly , in most gerontological literature people aged 60 years or above are considered as old and counted among the elderly segment of the population of the country. Ageing has now become a critical societal problem due to greater life expectancy and a considerable growth in elderly population everywhere . Population ageing is a global phenomenon . Globally , the total population is 7 billion of which 60+ people account for about 11.5 percent. This is projected to rise to about 22 percent by 2050 when children below 15 years of age will be outnumbered by the elderly (United Nation 2015). India, a leading populous country of the world , is experiencing unprecedented demographic change . Judging by the report of the technical group on population projections for India and states , 2011 - 2036 , aged persons in India in 2021 number nearly 138 million . This consists of 67 million males and 71 million females . Bangladesh is the eight largest and among the most densely populated countries in the World , with almost 2.2 percent of the total global population . As per the population and Housing Census over 15.3 million people in Bangladesh were 60 years or older which accounts for 9.28 share of the total population.

Ageing comes gradually but naturally to people and this is an inescapable reality to human life that cannot be wished away . Throughout the World , old frail and infirm persons are normally looked after by their children

and family members . But these long- cherished values of life have been gradually whittled away with the advancement of civilization . New ideas have replaced old values , changing the face of the society radically . In India & Bangladesh , the family ties are deep – rooted , particularly in rural areas but in urban areas , family ties are loosening and old people have started feeling neglected.

This is the post retirement phase in the life of the elderly when the earnings have dwindled . The pater familia's – the head of the family turns into a dependent himself . The children of the elderly begin their new lives and get separated from their parents because most of them are employed in places far away from home. This makes the elderly feel isolated . Social adjustment is another problem facing the elderly . Their social life , along with their personal life , becomes circumscribed . Even they consider themselves a burden on their own family and they tend to withdraw into their own shell. Jereiu et al., (2012) clearly , the major problems afflicting the elderly include financial insecurity , family and health issues and psychosocial problems like loneliness and depression . Deteriorating health and the concomitant medical problems are also common factors in old age . Malnutrition and poverty are very common in the final phase of their life.

With this regard , a number of older persons were looked after in institutions . In both the countries , the concept of institutional homes for the elderly is relatively new. The loneliness , the neglect and the lack of proper holistic care are rampant in many places and most of the older people come to terms with the existing environment although nobody seems to be really interested in taking care of their various needs . The old age home is a Western concept and nowadays such homes have become fairly familiar. Yet till today the home for the elderly is not in consonance with the traditional ethos or mindset of India & Bangladesh . But there is no denying that the OAHs have become almost indispensable . Taking adequate care of the elderly will be a major challenge for both the countries in the days to come.

The researcher is of the view that the problems of the elderly so prevalent in India & Bangladesh must be handled with greater care empathy , understanding and sensitivity . Such an approach could help better the lot of the elderly who deserve a fair deal. These are the ideas prompting the researcher to choose this field of study.

Research Methodology :

Research Objectives

- 1)To identify the factors that force the elderly to live in old age homes in both the countries .
- 2)To identify the various issues of elderly residents under the study area .
- 3)To examine the facilities available at the old age homes in both countries

Research Design:

In search of accomplishing objectives , the study has employed a comparative research design to know the various issues of the residents of homes for the aged in both the countries .In addition , to get an in-depth understanding about the elderly who live in old age home in Kolkata , West Bengal , India & Dhaka , Bangladesh , the method and data of the qualitative approaches were adopted in the study that includes case study and focus group discussions which were conducted along with descriptive ways to gather more information about the various issues of the elderly residents at old age homes.

Technique of data assembly :

This research study has used data primary and secondary . Data was collected from every selected elderly residents , those who are interested to take part in the study . Secondary data have also been gathered from various sources including research articles and various reports issued by various institutions and web -based resources.

Study Area:

The study area , Kolkata city of West Bengal in India & Dhaka city of Bangladesh have been selected for the study. West Bengal is one of the most populous Indian states . Ranked among the countries in the World with a very high density of population , Bangladesh is the eighth largest country in the World . Persons aged above sixty years and residing in homes for the old under the study area were taken for the research. The chosen study area of both countries are similar from the viewpoint of language , social & cultural aspects. In Kolkata , West Bengal , India two old age homes were randomly selected , and in Dhaka , Bangladesh two homes for the aged were indiscriminately chosen.

Sampling Strategy:

The purposive (non-probabilistic) sampling technique had been employed for selecting old age homes in both India & Bangladesh . Purposive sampling was used for selecting key informants.

Limitations of the study:

The study is confined to the older people living in old age homes in Kolkata city of India and Dhaka city of Bangladesh . It cannot be generalized with regard to the entire aged population of both the countries.

Findings of the case study:

The problem of the elderly population has now become global and it calls for serious study and attention . These problems have been highlighted here following some case studies of the elderly in India & Bangladesh . In spite of some socio-cultural differences and economic disparities , the problems of the elderly are virtually the same in both the countries . These are reflected in the conversations some following case studies though some respondents are totally reluctant to talk about their problems openly tend to withhold information . It is assumed that the following case studies might be reliable indicators in this regard.

Bayasko punarbasan kendra old age home : Gazipur , Bangladesh

A Muslim aged Md. Mojahidul Islam (name changed) aged 61 is currently residing in Gazipur bayashko punarbasan kendra . He worked in a private company as an engineer . His job tenure was till the age 65 but due to Covid he lost his job . He has a son and a daughter . The daughter is married and is settled in America. The son is currently passed out SSC . The loss of his job turned his life upside down. His wife lost her love for him as he became financially weak . There was a huge conflict . He was extremely disheartened knowing that everybody in the family was turning their back on him. Nobody cared about him , they only cared for his money . This thing killed him mentally . He decided to leave this place which was slowly turning into a graveyard for him. He then looked up on Facebook and came across bayashko punarbasan kendra , a free of cost old age home where he could spend the rest of his life. Being at the final stage of his life , like any other persons he wanted to be in the midst of his family but he knows very well such an opportunity might never come . He has reconciled himself to his life in the home for the aged because he knows that this is , at present his only way to survive.

Bayasko Punarbasan Kendra Old Age Home : Gazipur , Bangladesh

Nasreen Begum (name changed) is 72 years old . An illiterate female and by religion a Sunni Muslim , she married at an early age and her husband had passed away when he was 52. She had , 3 sons and a daughter . But the daughter died when she was three and Nasreen's younger son died at the age of 3 months . She is left with two sons , aged 46 and 44 respectively . At present Nasreen is suffering from various health ailments like diabetes , hypertension and arthritis . As she cannot afford to pay for the treatment and her children also not to support in this respect and then she had decided to stay at old age homes and she preferred Gazipur old age home because the service provided are free of cost .

Nasreen received many facilities here. The things she received here free of cost are medicine , clothes and other daily necessities . These facilities mean a great deal to her. The old age home authorities allow her to go home only two times a year . Nor can her family members visit her regularly. So, she has very little communication with her kin . Naturally a sense of deep loneliness and depression affects her.

Her problems notwithstanding, it is no doubt a good alternative shelter for her. It fulfils the basic necessities of her life which is something, she found impossible in her family. So, she goes on living here and will continue to do so for the rest of her life.

Asha Niketan Old Age Home : salt lake , Kolkata

Deepta Ghosh(name changed) is a Hindu widow aged 81 residing at Asha Niketan old age home Kolkata. She was born in Myanmar. She was brought up and educated in Kolkata. She did her Masters on Geography. However, she was unable to apply for a job as her husband was strictly against that. She has one son and one daughter. Her husband passed away at an early age. Her son was studying 12th standard at that time. After the demise of her spouse she fulfilled all her duties and arranged for her daughter's marriage. The daughter is currently settled abroad. The son is also living a very content life having a healthy job and being married. After fulfilling her duties she thought to herself that she had no more tasks so she decided to live independently and came to the old age home without telling anyone. She has been quite content with her life since coming here. She is satisfied with all the facilities at the old age home. She hopes to continue living in peace and did goodbye to her life.

All Bengal Women Union Old Home : Kolkata , Central

Dipika Roy (name changed) is an unmarried Hindu elderly women aged 64 who has been born and brought up in Asansol, West Bengal. After the death of her family members she became completely alone. She then decided to stay in a safe and secure place. She looked up on google and came across All Bengal Women Union old age home. She believed that staying in old age home was a far better option than staying at her relatives' home. She is happily living here and hopes her life finishes in such peace and security.

Discussion :

In the sunset of their life, the elderly badly need love, affection, understanding, attention and delicate care. The ideal of an extended family scenario is becoming a thing of the past. Nowadays, the younger members of the family are far too busy to spare enough time for the elderly. Moreover, many elderly people living in small dwelling face the problem of space. Such situations are seen both in India & Bangladesh. On top of this there is a perpetual paucity of funds. These are some of the major factors driving the elderly to turn to old age homes. The major problem plaguing the elderly old age home residents is their health condition. Deteriorating health leading to myriad medical problems characterizes old age. Thus, sheer survival becomes a tremendous challenge for the elderly with paltry earnings in the twilight years of their life. Hence, they are compelled to seek refuge in old age homes where they are assured of food, shelter and a modicum of medical aid. This is applicable to both India & Bangladesh.

Conclusion:

The rising tide of elderly population is causing concern. It is threatening to assume serious proportions in both India & Bangladesh. Thanks to the transforming family structure and erosion of age-old societal values the elderly are becoming increasingly vulnerable with regard to living arrangements, Medicare and an honourable and dignified existence. It is imperative that they enjoy security and peace while they live in the midst of their kin. It is due to the absence of a such peaceful and secure environment that the elderly are obliged to think in terms of shifting to old age homes. Admittedly, the old age home represents an alternative mode of life. But, as has been pointed out, there is still room for improvement in this sphere.

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