



Intervention of Social Work Knowledge in Redressing the Issues of Senior Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Senior Citizens in India face various challenges that could affect their quality of life. Many senior citizens do not have adequate financial resources or pensions to support themselves, leading to dependency on family or insufficient funds for basic needs. Access to quality healthcare is often limited to them and many senior citizens suffer from chronic illnesses without proper medical support. They are usually vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation, both within their families and within society. With the breakdown of joint family systems and the migration of younger family members to urban areas or abroad, many senior citizens live alone, leading to loneliness and social isolation. They often feel marginalized and disrespected, particularly in a rapidly modernizing society that values youth and productivity. There are insufficient specialized healthcare facilities and professionals trained in geriatric care. Depression, anxiety, and dementia are common among them but often go unrecognized and untreated due to stigma and lack of awareness. Existing social security measures and pension schemes are usually inadequate and do not cover



all senior citizens. Addressing all these issues requires multifaceted approaches involving government action, community support, and individual awareness with the help of professional social workers and their intervention to redress them.

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INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, the population of senior citizens has increased significantly, and these growing elderly population requires a higher quality of life (WHO, 2007) on par with the other population. Senior citizens are not competent enough to compete with younger generations in all aspects instead, their needs such as inclusivity, the fostering of social connections, adapting to and integrating into contemporary society, participating as active citizens, and prioritizing their quality of life within their own communities (Pilar Escuder-Mollon, 2014). Happiness, good health, and a peaceful life are crucial for an elder to enjoy a high quality of life. In Indian society, senior citizens often struggle to have a good quality of life because of limited financial support, poor healthcare, and widespread elder abuse.

Once people cross the age of 60 then they become weak physically and mentally. Further ceasing their economic source and revenue consequently depends on other family members accelerating their problems. A person working in a reputed institution might receive a pension after retirement, although this amount is often insufficient for their well-being. With poor health and chronic illnesses, they need proper healthcare facilities and a lowering of their source of revenue with less pension that may not be enough to afford quality medical treatment for them. They need financial assistance not only for medical expenses but also for other essential needs, such as livelihood support, community engagement programs, and social activities. A financial crisis among senior citizens can result in dependence on family members. If family support is unavailable, they may turn to borrowing money from friends or relatives which may lower their status in society, and that behavior of elderly individuals can disturb other family members, leading them to mistreat or abuse the seniors.

Elder abuse by family members can result from factors like caregiver burnout, financial problems, alcoholism, or the family's involvement in social and cultural activities, leading to elder neglect. Nowadays, many joint families have split into nuclear families and as a result, children often leave their parents in old age homes and move abroad for work. This may further create mental and psychological



problems for senior citizens such as loneliness, isolation, depression, anxiety, stress, and insecurity feeling. To handle their emotional and psychological problems there is a greater need for social work intervention to enhance the well-being of the elderly. Hence the present paper is significantly helpful and useful to the present context of society which carries with following objectives;

Objectives:

1. To assess the quality of life of the senior citizens
2. To understand the economic stability of senior citizens after their retirement
3. To find out the accessibility of healthcare facilities for senior citizens
4. To realize the violence against senior citizens happening in families and society
5. To analyze the insecurity feeling among the senior citizens
6. To associate social work knowledge and intervention in resolving the issues of senior citizens

Methodology:

This research follows a qualitative approach through desk-based analysis, relying on secondary data to investigate how social work knowledge helps address the challenges encountered by senior citizens. Information was sourced from scholarly articles, official government documents, policy frameworks, and reports from non-governmental organizations. The study focuses on areas such as economic conditions after retirement, access to healthcare, elder abuse, feelings of insecurity, and the role of social work practices in addressing these concerns. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify effective responses and interventions for improving the well-being of the elderly.

Need for quality life for senior citizens:

In public policy and economics, a continuous debate surrounds individuals' self-reported well-being (quality of life), and enhancing public well-being is increasingly recognized as a vital societal goal. Well-being and health are closely linked, and this connection becomes especially significant in older age due to the rising prevalence of chronic illnesses as people age. While life expectancy increases and treatments for life-threatening diseases become more effective, the challenge of preserving quality of life in later years is gaining importance (Andrew Steptoe, 2015). The United Nations World Assembly on Ageing and the International Year of the Older Person aimed to raise awareness of critical issues affecting older individuals and their families. Additionally, the UN recognizes the importance of preparing society to address the needs of older persons while also linking their valuable resources. Older individuals should



have the opportunity to keep growing, maintain their independence for as long as possible, actively engage in social activities, and make meaningful, productive contributions to society. This section begins with an overview of the concept of well-being, a construct frequently used to evaluate overall life satisfaction and quality of life. As such, it holds significant relevance for this topic. (Antonucci, Okoro Dudu, & Akiyama, 2002).

Economic stability among senior citizens:

It can be challenging to determine whether health influences socioeconomic status (SES) or vice versa. The relationship is often complicated by reverse relationships, where poor health may lead to lower education, income, or wealth, while higher SES can promote better health. Additionally, other unmeasured factors, such as genetic predispositions or early-life conditions, might simultaneously affect both health and SES, leading to omitted variable bias (Brenes-Camacho, 2011). From a policy standpoint, debates on the design and extent of social security, health insurance, and other welfare programs reflect the recognition of the need to ensure a stable income after retirement and protect the elderly from financial hardships resulting from poor health or unexpected events (ANGELIQUECHAN, MARYBETHOFSTEDAL, & HERMALIN, 2002). After retirement, people often receive low pensions or limited financial assistance, resulting in a loss of financial freedom. This can lead to concerns about their health and family security, prompting them to save money to ensure the well-being of their family members. If they receive financial support from their children or other family members, they may manage their expenses. However, in today's costly environment, surviving solely on pensions is difficult. The situation is even more challenging for senior citizens who are not retired government or private sector employees. Therefore, senior citizens often need to rely on others for financial support.

Accessibility of healthcare facilities for senior citizens:

Healthcare systems should focus not only on addressing illness and disability but also on promoting methods to enhance positive psychological states. However, considering large-scale clinical trials to evaluate the impact of efforts to increase life enjoyment on longevity may be premature. The end of life is another situation where health significantly impacts psychological well-being, yet the medical community has faced challenges in ensuring optimal care and comfort (Andrew Steptoe, 2015). Healthcare services for illnesses and diseases are often expensive for the elderly, making it difficult for many seniors to afford the necessary care. Nowadays, proper care for the elderly is scarce, often due to the migration of



their children abroad, resulting in a lack of emotional support. The government has introduced various health insurance schemes and programs for the elderly, but they have not been effectively utilized.

Elderly abuse:

Elder abuse is increasingly acknowledged worldwide as a widespread and severe issue that demands immediate attention from healthcare systems, social welfare organizations, policymakers, and society as a whole. As the global older adult population rapidly grows, elder abuse is anticipated to become an even more urgent issue, impacting millions of people around the world (Pillemer, Burnes, Riffin, & Lachs., 2015). However, in the previously mentioned studies, behavior was classified as elder abuse exclusively based on the frequency of neglect, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and financial mistreatment, without considering the extent of damage caused by the abuse (Comijs, Pot, Smit, Bouter, & CeesJonker., 1998). Elderly individuals are vulnerable as they are often neglected by their families and society due to their older age and perceived inefficiency. They may also be exploited by family members, including their children, for various reasons. Violence against the elderly has become increasingly cruel, with some individuals resorting to physically assaulting seniors, while others go as far as committing murder.

Vulnerability and safety concerns among senior citizens:

Elders may become vulnerable and less efficient as they age, often facing challenges like dementia, depression, and stress. However, they remain valuable sources of wisdom and experience, yet are frequently neglected due to these age-related disorders. Economic instability often forces the elderly to rely on others, making it difficult for them to afford quality healthcare. This lack of access can contribute to the development of chronic illnesses. Seniors are often neglected by those around them and may also face severe exploitation, which can significantly harm their mental health. Recently, more people are enthusiastic about migrating abroad for job opportunities, leaving their parents behind in their home country. This has led to an increase in robberies targeting houses where only the elderly reside, as seniors often lack the strength to defend themselves. As a result, feelings of insecurity are common among seniors who live without the presence of their children and loved ones. However, healthcare facilities for the elderly are insufficient, and certain aging disorders are prevalent due to previous work-related stress and the burden of past responsibilities.

Social Work intervention in addressing the needs of senior citizens:



The sharp rise in the older adult population poses an urgent challenge for social work. The field must strengthen its emphasis on later life stages, intergenerational connections, and the effects of this demographic shift on family structures. There is a greater need for well-qualified social workers who are professionally trained in the area to assist the senior citizens and their family members to strengthen the relationships in their family addressing the needs of the senior citizens. There is a dearth of professional and well-trained social workers in this service as the majority of social workers in aging services have little to no specialized training in gerontological social work (Scharlach, Damron-Rodriguez, Robinson, & Feldman, 2014). Therefore, social work education and training is very much essential particularly in the field of geriatric services to promote the well-being of the aging population in the West in general and East including Indian society in particular. Social workers should advocate for the promotion of social work education from the basics and work towards establishing healthy family relationships in society by enhancing the respect, faith, and dignity of individuals. Additionally, it is crucial to inculcate the importance of relationships within the education system among stakeholders, emphasizing the responsibility of individuals to care for their parents in old age rather than abandoning them.

Social workers should also identify the available government schemes and programs for senior citizens and ensure and enhance their quality of life by making them reachable to needy people. Similarly, social workers should ensure that senior citizens have access to appropriate healthcare facilities in the community. Further, they should extend their geriatric care and counselling services to the needy people and create awareness about taking care of elderly in a larger extent.

Social workers should also work through NGOs and government organizations to identify cases of elderly abuse, exploitation, negligence, and other serious issues faced by senior citizens in society and redress appropriately through counselling, consultation, online counselling services, advocacy, and other needed support. They should strive to ensure social justice for the elderly and provide even counselling to their family members to address these concerns.

With support from the government and private sectors, daycare centers can be established for the elderly, providing them with opportunities to spend quality time and share their feelings with their peers. The government should establish senior citizen associations and appoint dedicated personnel including qualified social workers to oversee their operations, ensuring they provide activities and services that promote the well-being and engagement of seniors. The government should also establish well-maintained parks where senior citizens can spend quality time with others of the same age group.

**Summary and conclusion:**

Elders are encountering numerous challenges these days, with only a few being addressed. Geriatric care has become essential, both now and in the future. Therefore, it is crucial to first educate everyone about the importance of caring for their parents in their old age with love and compassion. This way, the need for external agencies and old age homes can be minimized. The government should also consider increasing the old age pension to help senior citizens manage their healthcare expenses with the increasing cost of living. Additionally, more programs should be introduced for the welfare and upliftment of senior citizens. This will certainly help and ensure a happier and more comfortable life and quality of life indeed for the senior citizens.

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