

Issues and Concerns of the Elderly in Present Scenario

Dr. M. Dhvakshayani*

Associate Professor, Department of Home Science, PGGCG-11, Chandigarh

Abstract – The growth of individualism and desire for independence, urbanization and large scale migration for economic reasons of the younger generation all these factors affect the status of the elderly. Factors associated with social exclusion of old people are multiple and are connected with economic and social circumstances which prevent the old people to participate fully in the society. They are excluded from the wider community as well. As a result old people have no voice or recognition in the society in which they live. This article aims to highlight theoretical and operational framework of understanding the social exclusion and its impact among older people in four dimensions. Firstly, the reasons for social exclusion are analyzed. Secondly, the impact of social exclusion and the problems encountered by the elderly are studied. Thirdly, what factors may prevent people from social exclusion at old age is discussed. Social inclusion is important for old people as it would improve the quality of life and independence. So lastly, approaches that can be followed for social inclusion of the elderly in the society are also focused in this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

Social exclusion is a concept reflecting people's participation in the social, civic, political and recreational life of their communities and society. Social exclusion is commonly defined as "...a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural, or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole" (Levitas et al., 2007, p. 86).[1]

SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ELDERLY

Social exclusion is more important for an older person because of deprivation is based on age related factors which operate to prevent them in social participation. Exclusion for older people centered on poverty (largely from reliance on state pension, but also from fuel poverty), health and life expectancy, fear of crime, poor housing, lack of independence. (Aldridge et al 2011).[2] Barnes et al (2006)[3] find that people who live alone, or have children but no partner, are the most likely to experience exclusion in two, three or more dimensions. This is particularly important given that approximately a quarter of older people live alone, with the proportion living alone rising with age. Older people are also more exposed to poor health which can limit their independence as well as their ability to become less excluded. Chambers (1995)[4] described the eight dimensions of deprivation among the elderly

as poverty, social inferiority, social isolation, physical weakness, vulnerability, seasonality, powerlessness and humiliation of the aged. Many studies found an important relationship between social exclusion and age. Increasing age was found to have a particularly strong relationship with exclusion from social relationships, service provision and material consumption, particularly with individuals aged over 80. Various studies across the globe show that economic deprivation of the aged is one of the common factors for social exclusion of the aged.

REASONS FOR SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN ELDERLY

They find a variety of reasons associated with exclusion among older people which includes advanced old age, single person households, poor mental and/or physical health, lack of access to private transport and lack of own house.

Financial insecurity- Older people are faced by the threat of losing financial independence which underpins the identification of different domains of social exclusion for older people. Early retirement could be the major reason for financial hardships. Unemployment in the old age leads to financial dependence and insecurity.

Ill health - Lack of access to health care, leads to physical and health insecurity among the elderly.

Dependency/disability – Among aged the denial of the basic needs increases the dependency of them

to lead a minimum level of life. Dependency on medicines, food and clothing Houses are ill equipped for the old people, such as houses on two levels inhabited by people who were unable to use the stairs because of mobility problems.

Social insecurity- Social isolation and loneliness are often considered to be problems of growing older. As people age, the social interaction between children, relatives and friends may become limited because old people stay at home due to mobility difficulties and increased chronic illness. Older individuals may be dissatisfied with the narrowing of their social network; and for those who are dissatisfied, the result is feeling lonely.

Family breakdown – This might be due to migration of the younger generation which leaves an empty nest and the elderly are excluded. Children think that parents are no more there responsibility and are excluded from the family. Apart from this generation gap between younger and older, differences in view points and lack of time for the elderly will also lead to family breakdown.

Cultural insecurity- Older people who are excluded from cultural activities may be more prone to instances of poor mental health and depression, may find it more difficult to form and maintain social relationships, and may also be more prone to isolation and loneliness

IMPACT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY ELDER PEOPLE

Problems encountered by the socially excluded aged include - Theft or something being carried out of hands/ pockets/ bags, cheating of money/ possession or property. Feeling of loneliness, leads to depression and multiple health problems in old age. As elderly become dependent due to ill health they are being excluded from material resources and social relations. Many older people like to stop and chat to people in the street and visit relatives, friends and neighbors on their way home. But they are avoided even by the neighborhood and are felt as a burden to be taken for any social function or cultural activity.

FACTORS THAT PREVENT PEOPLE FROM SOCIAL EXCLUSION AT OLD AGE

- Planning of finances at an early stage of life, so that they are financially independent in old age.
- Reinforcing life skills and motivating the elderly to lead a decent lifestyle.
- Involvement in cultural activities, civic activities and free-time pursuits for the elderly.

- An environment that supports and improves the well-being of elderly.

APPROACHES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ELDERLY

Social inclusion is largely an individual's choice and may be influenced by factors like living situations; cultural background; area of residence; income; life experience; willingness to seek help; social networks and connections with their community. However older people need to be involved at all levels of planning and delivery. So that they can contribute their own knowledge and experience and their needs may not be overlooked.

Employment - Encourage the service providers or the government to accept the services of the old people which in turn would help them to meet their basic needs and requirements at old age. Respect the skills of older people those gained in previous employment, so that they would get minimum employment.

Pensions – Increased pensions and benefits should be provided for the old people so that they can bet minimum income for economic support.

Age friendly communities - Providing local network groups which encourages and enables the old people to come together and to participate more effectively. Regeneration activities can also be provided to change and improve the circumstances of the old people. Planning programmes for active participation of old people in Internet and possible services they could need through the network or applications. Workshops that promote learning and participation in cultural events should be organized. Local communities should enable individuals and groups to develop the skills and confidence to facilitate active participation in various activities.

Institutional arrangement- Extra institutional arrangements should be made for the aged so that they may lead a stress free life in their old age.

Policies should be re framed – There are various welfare schemes and policies for the elderly which were initiated by the government. However due to lack of proper monitoring and implementation lacunas they are not reaching the expected goals. So from time to time depending on the need and changing needs of the society innovative schemes and suitable policies should be framed by the government for the welfare of the aged.

Transport services- Home assess or transport facility for the elderly and guaranteed home assistance services should be provided.

CONCLUSION

Older people are at a high risk of suffering social exclusion due to different stereotypes of the society. It is the duty of the society to avoid there exclusion and develop another social and cultural construction of old age. New interventions, improvements and support of the society can mitigate the consequences faced by the elderly.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. M. Dhrakshayani*

Associate Professor, Department of Home Science,
PGGCG-11, Chandigarh

dhrakshayanimoosapet@gmail.com