

Psychological Health of Elderly Population



Dr. Madhumita
At+Post-Shubhankarpur,
(Near Badrinath Mandir)
District- Darbhanga (Bihar) India

INTRODUCTION

During the last century, the biggest achievement of the human civilization has been a major breakthrough in health sector which has brought with it greater life- expectancy at birth. In India, people's life expectancy at birth has risen from 49.7 years during 1970- 75 to 60.3 years during 1991 to 95 and by the turn of the century it was 66 years (Source: www.censusofindia.com). Increased longevity created the phenomenon of population ageing and it has become one of the toughest challenges to be met by the society. In the developing country like India, meaning of old age is related to physical incapacity, psychological failures, deterioration and disabilities etc. It is a phase of rapid decline in the mental and emotional health of one's life. Chronologically the age of 58 or 60 is considered to be the beginning of the old age which is accompanied by a series of problems in their day- to- day life; such as income generation, health, use of free time social security, social participation dignity and respect and so on. In the present study, emphasis is laid on the psychological health of the elderly population which affects the quality of their life to great extent.

Problems Experienced by Elderly Population:- It is a well- known fact that no one can escape ageing. At the time of youth it does not occupy our thoughts much as the nature has blessed the youth with the most propitious state of mind. But gradually sooner or later, with each passing year ageing becomes a major concern for everyone because the elderly people experience so many losses; like- loss of health, loss in quality of emotional relationships, loss of feeling useful, reduction in quality of life etc. Most prominently ageing leads to the deterioration of brain functioning due to which they become a vulnerable part of society.

There has been rapid socio- economic transformation of the Indian society due to a number of factors, such as migration to cities in search of better opportunities, breakdown in relationships, migrating

overseas, disintegration of joint family system etc. Owing to this, there is great pressure on all aspects of care for the older persons - be it financial, shelter or health.

Kavita Martin in her article published in **Frontline** “ **For the Welfare of Elders**” pointed the need for social security measures for the elderly persons due to the above reasons. It also focuses care of aged people highlighting the conservation and humanitarianism. Generation gap and change in life styles have led to the feeling of marginalization, isolation and insecurity among the older persons. So it is the call of the time that special care and attention should be provided to them so that they remain in mainstream life and utilize their potentialities and effectiveness even in the evening of their lives. After all, ability not chronology should be the measure of what people can contribute to the society.

Suggestions To Improve The Psychological Health Of Elderly People:- **Dr Ward** has discussed about **coping mechanism** in his study to deal with problems related to old age. As per his opinion, it requires co-ordinated action from families, communities and above all from the elderly themselves to cope up with the age related problems. They need to pay due attention to their diet, daily routine exercise and healthcare. If the elderly people are given specialized attentions and they participate in every sphere of intellectual discourse along with the youth instead of staying in isolation, it will help them to regain their self esteem and self confidence. In order to promote healthy and active ageing following measures should be adopted:

- Create living conditions and environments that support well- being and allow people to lead a healthy life.
- Social support for older people and their caregivers.
- Programmes to prevent and deal with elder abuse.
- Adequate housing through supportive housing policy.

Besides this, Dr Ward says, “A bit of gentle encouragement from family members could help them to move outside of their comfort zone in order to engage in healthy stimulating activities that can improve their mood and quality of life.

To enable the elderly people lead a stress free life, the Indian government offers several senior citizen benefits in India. Rebate on income tax, discount in train fare and airfare, and higher deductions on health insurance premiums under Section 80D of I-T Act; these are some benefits that senior citizens can avail.

CONCLUSION

A financially secured future provides good quality of life and mental state. It's the psychology of a person which changes the definition of ageing. If a person is psychologically well and fit then the health is not a big issue during the old age. So let's make a sincere effort for the psychological health of elderly people. Although it is very difficult for many people to accept ageing because the experiences of old age have great psychological impact on them but if the **Activity Theory** developed by Robert Havighurst in 1961 is applied to them then they will start enjoying their lives with great happiness. This Theory proposes that aging adults who engage in daily activities, that they perceive as productive, age successfully. They are happier when engaged in activities they enjoy and this results to their good psychological health.

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