A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON
‘PSYCHO – SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND SOCIO – CULTURAL ISSUES
OF INSTITUTIONALIZED AND NON – INSTITUTIONALIZED ELDERS’

ABSTRACT

Population ageing is the most significant emerging demographic phenomenon in world today. In all over the world declining in fertility, mortality, migration of population and increased longevity due to advance medical support has resulted in higher numbers and proportions of elder population (60+). Rapid ageing of population presents new challenges to government, families and one of the main social problem in Indian society during 21st century. In modern period, changes in family environment from joint to nuclear family system affecting psycho-social care of elderly population. Lack of physical, psycho-social, economic, emotional, cultural and religious care in modern family due to changes in living pattern, lack of time in modern employment among working age group, employment of women on par with men, feeling of empty nest in modern family and interest of younger generation in competitive world. This situation leads to need of old age homes which provide physical, psychological, social and emotional support for the elders.

In sum, increased population of elders in modern period results in physical, psychological, social, emotional, cultural issues are becoming paramount in the emerging modern societies due to impact of various advancements. Separation of families, lack of care and respects from younger generation, lack of opportunities for working age group to provide time to family, impact of western culture etc., posing elders to suffer from psycho – social problems as well as cultural issues affecting their quality of life and psychological well-being.

The present study focuses on understanding ‘psycho-social and cultural issues of institutionalized and non-institutionalized elders’ by interviewing elderly person living in family and old age homes. The present study has been classifies into six parts such as socio-demographic profile of respondents, psychological problems, and social problems associated in modern period, cultural issues, social environment (family or institution), subjective and psychological wellbeing of elderly respondents. Out of 30 districts of Karnataka, 15 selected districts were considered for the study based on number of old age homes exist in each districts. 240 elderly respondents living in old
age homes and 240 elderly respondents living in family were considered to carry out the study. The total size of the sample is 480. To satisfy the objectives of the study, a descriptive and exploratory design was adopted. Further, Simple stratified random sampling design was adopted to collect the primary data.

From the present study, it is understood that elderly population in modern period were suffering from psychological, sociological and cultural issues due to various developmental factors. Analysis of psychological problems of elders living in institutional and non-institutional settings shows that 58.3% of respondents in institutions are prone to high prevalence of depression compared to non-institutionalized respondents. Further, study also reveals that majority of institutionalized male respondents (11.56%) and non-institutionalized male respondents (9.42%) are prone to high depression compared to female respondents.

According to the study, 23.89% of male respondents living in institutions and 22.33% living in families are suffering from anxiety disorder when compared to female respondents. Further, 23.62% of institutionalized respondents belonging to 60-69 years and 22.09% of non-institutionalized respondents belonging to age of 80 years and above are prone to high anxiety in present phenomenon. It is also clear from the study that institutionalized male (8.40%) and non-institutionalized male respondents (7.99%) are prone to high prevalence of stress compared to female respondents. Based on age group of respondents, institutionalized respondents belonging to age group of 80 years and above (8.15%) and non-institutionalized respondents (7.35%) of 70-79 years are suffering from high level of stress compared to other age groups in old age.

The study reveals that in assessing social interaction of elders with family, friends, neighbours, relatives and others, 27.9% of institutionalized respondents and 12.1% of non-institutionalized respondents expressed that there is reduced social interaction with family members, relatives and others in recent years. Hence, non-institutionalized respondents are prone to high prevalence of lack of social interaction and communication. With regard to spending time among the respondents, 33.8% of institutionalized respondents spend more time with friends in institutions whereas 20.0% of non-institutionalized respondents spend time with friends, neighbours, pet animals and others except family members or relatives.
It is evident from study that regarding care and support of elders, 91.7% of institutionalized respondents are attended by inmates and friends. Non-institutionalized respondents expresses 46.7% by friends of same age group in their locality. Hence, there is lack of caregivers in modern family system. Regarding the social isolation and loneliness of respondents, 44.6% of institutionalized respondents expressed it is due to lack of love and care in family and 32.5% mentioned migration of children for better opportunity has resulted in loneliness. Whereas, 34.6% of non-institutionalized respondents expressed that lack of social care and support is due to changes in living pattern, lack of love and care and migration of children. Hence, there is an increased social isolation and loneliness among elders living in modern families compared to traditional families.

The study related to cultural issues of elders in modern phenomenon revealed that 26.7% of non-institutionalized respondents belonging to age group of 70-79 years and 24.67% of institutionalized respondents belonging to 80 years and above expressed that there is reduced care, love and values regarding old age and elderly population by family members, working age group and others. 16.81% of institutionalized respondents of 70-79 years and 17.0% of non-institutionalized respondents of 80 years and above expressed that there is limited ethical and legal responsibilities to perform by elders in modern families. Hence, institutionalized respondents of advance age group are prone to cultural issues in modern period than non-institutionalized respondents.

It is clear from the study that 29% of non-institutionalized respondents and 23.83% of institutionalised respondents have felt that there is reduced value and respect for older person and various responsibilities of modern families. Regarding deterioration of ethical and legal responsibilities, 16% of institutionalized respondents and 17.0% of non-institutionalized respondents expressed that reduced ethical as well legal responsibilities in modern families. So, issues relating to culture in modern family environment is affected by non-institutionalized respondents than institutionalized respondents.

In sum prevalence of psycho-social problems found to more among elders living in institutions. Issues relating to cultural aspects are found more among elders living in families. Environment of modern families has undergo rapid transformation
in care of elderly persons. Hence, old age persons suffering from high prevalence of psycho-social and cultural issues in modern period. Need based programme is considered important in addressing the issue at the earliest.

Finally, the period of old age is golden years in human life span, as it is considered as evening of life. A good number of programmes have to be implemented for welfare of elderly population. Age-friendly policies and programme at family, community, national and international level helps in overall wellbeing of elderly population. Social work intervention certainly helps in solving various problems relating to old age. Gerontological Social Work is a profession dealing with the issues associated with aged population. Working with case, group, community and social work research and administration are methods dealing the issue. Further, social workers can play a role of counsellors, experts, mediators and advocates in solving psycho-social problems of elderly population to a greater extent.