CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The present work “Aging Issues of Senior Citizens – The Welfare Measures Taken by Changanacherry Archdiocese Through Old Age Homes” has thrown light on many problems associated with old age such as their aspirations and frustrations which demand special attention of the civil society as well as the ecclesial community. It has also revealed the richness in humanity and wisdom of older people who still have a great deal to offer to the society and the Church at large.

This chapter summarizes the conclusions arrived at by the researcher. A few suggestions and recommendations are also proposed.

6.2 Overview of the Findings

This study was conducted, for evaluating the life of elderly people in the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry
and the welfare measures taken by this Archdiocese through Old Age Homes. The analysis of socio-physical and psychological problems of the aged people enabled the researcher to understand, the nature and extent of various problems faced by them. It is better to present a consolidated picture of the study. It may provide us with some insight towards framing an appropriate policy of suggestions to accommodate the needs of the aged people.

It has been found that majority of the respondents lived with their families, before joining the institution. But they were forced to leave their home because of various reasons. migration of the younger people due to employment from village to town, from town to city and from city to abroad increases the hardships to the older generation. In Kerala there is a large scale exodus of young workers to the Gulf region, leaving behind the old. Many of them had great problems in their families also. Strained relationship with the children and siblings is the most significant reason prompting institutionalization. The causes of this estrangement may include generation gap, weakening of family ties, selfishness of youngsters etc. Now these old people think that they are forced to live in this institution, as they do not have any other alternative.
All of the respondents have reported that they are fully satisfied and do not have any problem in the institution. They gain a feeling of security and compassion from other inmates who belong to the similar age group, having similar attitudes and interests. Besides, personal care is offered to them by the staff in these institutions. All the respondents are of the view that institutional life can never be a substitute for family life; nevertheless it can be concluded that in the present society Old Age Homes offer great relief for the aged.

In this study the researcher tried his best to elicit the problems of the elderly and the welfare measures taken by Archdiocese of Changanacherry through Old Age Homes. This study was an attempt to fulfill some of the objectives.

The broad focus of the study are as follows:

- To study the general, social, economic and demographic conditions of the elderly;
- To know the general problems of the aged;
- To look into the living conditions of the aged in the institutional setting;
• To understand the perception of the elderly with regard to the existing old age home services;

• To study the life satisfaction of the aged in the old age homes;

• To ascertain the role of voluntary organizations in providing services to the needy ones;

• To seek suggestions from both the aged and the care givers to improve the life situations of the elderly;

• To understand the welfare measures taken by Archdiocese of Changanacherry through Old Age Homes.

The research is based on some 100 aged persons from 20 Old Age Homes in 5 districts under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Archdiocese of Changanacherry.

6.2.1 About the Old Age Homes

Social Scientists S.L. Goel and R.K. Jain have described the basic structure of the Old Age Homes\(^{47}\), which is given below. This

will provide a benchmark for assessing the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.

6.2.1.1 Objectives

Institutional care may be provided for those aged who have no relatives to support them. Persons with families should, as far as possible, be encouraged to keep contact with them. Institutional care may therefore be provided only to the poor and the destitutes.

6.2.1.2 Intake

Institutions should have a definite intake policy and necessary conditions for admission.

6.2.1.3 Location and Building

The building for an urban home for the aged should as far as possible be located on the outskirts of the city. The premises’ space may be utilized for a small garden. The institution should be easily approachable by local transport. Medical facilities, if available in the nearby community, may be used by the home. Dormitory type of accommodations should be substituted by rooms for two to three inmates each. Rooms should have proper ventilation, fresh air, light etc. There should be separate rooms for reading, recreation and dining.
6.2.1.4 Food

Four meals, two major and two minor a day, should be served. The daily ration should make a nutritious and balanced diet, with an emphasis on protective foods.

6.2.1.5 Recreational Facilities

Recreational facilities such as library, reading room, indoor games etc should be provided in the home. This will make for regular contacts between the inmates and the other members of the community. The inmates may be encouraged to take interest in various activities, engage themselves in suitable work, and develop hobbies.

6.2.1.6 Staff

The success of the Old Age Homes will depend upon the type of staff running it. The staff should have interest in the welfare of the aged and also an understanding of their problems. Normally the ratio of the staff to the inmates should be 1:10 or as near to it as possible. Some staff members should stay on the premises of the institution. There should be adequate nursing staff.

These are the norms expected to be followed by Old Age Homes.
The main findings of the survey are as follows:

- In the Archdiocese of Changanacherry there are two types of Old Age Homes. One is the “Free” type which cares for the destitutes who have no one else to care of. They are given shelter, food, clothing and medical care. The second type is the “paid” homes where care is provided for a fee. Table 5.3.1 provides the information about the types of homes for the aged.

- Regarding the objectives of the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry, the researcher found out that it has a definite aim and intake policy. The motive for running Old Age Homes is to help everyone particularly the neglected elderly and the elderly destitute. They could spend their last days happily and comfortably and they should be able to face death with dignity and peace and join his/her creator in the Heavenly Kingdom.

- Through this study the researcher realized that all of these Old Age Homes have definite policy also. For granting admission, the Homes impose certain eligibility conditions. These mostly include age (60 years or more) and economic condition (low income groups) and, in a few cases, domiciliation of the state
and vacancy in the Home. Table 5.4.3 indicates that the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry are ready to accept and help elderly irrespective of caste, colour and creed.

Certainly the Old Age Homes are located in a pleasant, quiet atmosphere. It has some open ground so that the old can move about freely and safely for exercise, relaxation or peace of mind. In vacant land it is possible to grow fruits, vegetables or flowers if water is available. This creates a pleasant atmosphere around the Old Age Homes. Recreation rooms should be built. All of the institutionalized aged (100%) under investigation reported that all the Old Age Homes have sufficient facility and they are happy about the facilities provided to them Table 5.7.4 clearly depicts this idea.

As regards the social, physical and psychological problems of the elderly people, it was found that 18% of the respondents feel loneliness in the present system. Table 5.6.1 points to this aspect. This is because many of them do not maintain their family contacts and they also suffer from some sort of physical ailments.
Among the 45% have opportunity at times to have contact with the family. This is because the elderly people come forward to keep the relationship between them and their family; and sometimes the children may also take initiative in keeping the contact. The condition of other 55% who do not have any contact with the family members is worse. Even though they have problems, 100% of the inmates are able to adjust with the caregivers. From the study it is clear that 100% of the respondents are able to maintain good relationship with caregivers.

In the study, it was found that all the respondents face some psychological problems. Table 5.6.5 shows that 96% of the respondents feel boredom in the institution. Table 5.6.13 points out that 10% feel stress and strain and 89% have anxiety and depression. A major source of all problems of the elderly is the feeling of loneliness and worthlessness.

88% of the respondents have sleep disorder. For the institutionalized, sleep disorder need not be considered serious enough to call for treatment. Even at homes, insomnia is pushed away as natural and does not give necessary treatment. The
problems of life and the depression or disappointment with life are probably the reasons for such situations.

- It is a difficult situation when the people find themselves disappointed with life. Majority of the respondents think that the life of others is better than theirs. Whether it is sometimes or always, the percentage who feel that others are better than they are is 98%. 87% respondents have death fear. With anxiety and depression, thought about death becomes frightening.

- 13% respondents are not able to manage their daily activities and they need help from others. The researcher has observed that physical ailments, psychological illnesses and adjustment problems are quite common in this phase of life. The study also shows that every respondent suffers from one or other disease. For example, 88% of the respondents suffer from sleep disorder, 91% suffer from amnesia, 54% suffer from visual disability, 62% suffer from difficulty in walking and 30% have hearing problem. Majority of the respondents undergo geriatric treatments. 40% take medicines regularly and 53% occasionally.

- To meet psychological needs of the aged, the homes offer several programmes. In the study, it was found that 73% of the
respondents engage in various recreational activities. The various recreational activities include morning and evening walk, watching T.V, listening to radio, chatting, gardening etc. These recreational activities make them happy and contented.

➢ The atmosphere of freedom in home gives the elderly a sense of power and self-worth. The findings (Table 5.5.12) shows that all of the respondents experienced minimum external restrictions as personal freedom is respected at home. It boosts their sense of values and pride and they felt very happy, comfortable and are at peace with themselves.

➢ The study also points out (Table 5.5.5) that majority of the institutionalized aged (96%) under investigation were friendly and cordial in general and caring specially when someone is sick.

➢ The elderly maintained good relationship with the authority (Table 5.6.2). It is noted that most of the respondents appreciated the service they received from the caregivers and kept a friendly relationship with them.
6.3 Interpretations of Research Hypothesis

- For the first hypothesis the p value (Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) is less than 0.05, therefore we accept the research hypothesis that the service provided by Old Age Homes of Archdiocese of Changanacherry is very valuable and all the inmates are fully satisfied.

- For the second hypothesis the p value Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) is less than 0.05, therefore we accept the research hypothesis that Poor life pattern indicates their psycho-social problem.

- For the third hypothesis the p value is Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) less than 0.05, therefore we accept the research hypothesis that the inmates are very satisfied with the welfare measures provided by the Old Age Homes of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.

- For the last hypothesis the p value is Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) less than 0.05, therefore we accept the research hypothesis that the relationship with the care giver positively affect the life of inmates of the Old Age Homes.
6.4 Suggestions and Recommendations

- In order to improve these type of Old Age Homes, the investigator has the following Suggestions and Recommendations. It would be relevant in easing the problems of the aged.

- The government must support to the Old Age Homes. Then they can improve their facilities.

- The younger generation should be made aware of the love and care needed by the old people.

- The community should facilitate economic help to the aged. The aged can be helped to receive their pension, and be made aware of the different grant-in-aid schemes of the government. The public may be encouraged to make donations for improving the standard of living of the inmates of free type Old Age Homes and thus to help them to lead a better life.

- As psychological factors play a vital role in the physical well being too, the facilities provided in the Old Age Homes should be designed in such a way that they must physically and psychologically be conducive to the aged people.
Social workers can help the elderly to be aware about the various policies and programmes related to the welfare of the aged in our country. This will help the elderly to protect their rights.

During the survey it was observed that single rooms are best suited for male inmates. The elderly women, however, preferred sharing their rooms. The in-charges of the Old Age Homes stated that women were more accommodative in nature but male inmates often created problems both for themselves and for others when they share their rooms.

Attaching a day care activity for senior citizens with hospitals, primary health centers, educational institutions, religious places etc are possible, if we seriously consider the protection and care of the elderly as their rights.

Organization of group activities are essential for the inmates so that the aged people can spend their time in meaningful activities. They should also be encouraged to participate in the day to day working of these institutions and we voluntarily take up responsibilities like supervision of kitchen and cooking, gardening and general cleanliness of the premises. These will develop in them a sense of belonging to the institution.
Participation in these activities has to be in accordance with their health and physical strength.

- To remove the feelings of loneliness and boredom and to improve the mental health of the aged inmates, it is desirable that either a nursery or a crèche be attached to these, preferably within the home premises, so that the aged can take part in their functioning. It is a fact that kids and old people are mutually attached to each other for both of groups can engage in leisure activities and they can devote ample time for each other.

- The Homes must be equipped for providing necessary first aid especially in case of emergency. A full time nurse and a part time doctor should be employed for the care of their day to day medical problems.

- Free medical care may be provided with the help of some organizations.

- Forming organizations of elderlies and caretakers will be a great help.

- To help them psychologically counseling classes can be arranged.

- Spiritual care is necessary for the aged. Most of them tend to be
deeply religious and spiritual. So pastoral care may be given to them.

➢ All should realize that old age is not an issue to be taken up by some religion or a section of society. It is a common phenomenon. Unless and until a moral boosting is given, these voiceless people will remain as voiceless. So first of all families must be conscientised, giving them concrete vision about the dignity of human kind and especially the elderly. The picture about elderly in the eyes of the present generation must be one that of divine and majestic rather than, rusty or useless. Hence, younger generation especially children may be motivated and encouraged to take care of the aged in a family environment with due respect.

➢ Research is needed on the psychology of the aged, problems of single and childless couples, efficacy of services for the aged, and health and nutritional problems of the aged.

➢ Further studies can be done on the psycho-economic problems faced by the care givers of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry.
6.5 Conclusion

The thesis work titled “Aging Issues of Senior Citizens – The Welfare Measures Taken by Changanacherry Archdiocese Through Old Age Homes” is the result of a study conducted by the researcher using detailed literature review, personal interviews and statistical techniques. The researcher followed computerized analysis. SPSS is used for analyzing the data. Tables and graphs were used in analysis, adequate interpretation was drawn out regarding variables.

It is evident that due to socio-economic changes in the wake of urbanization and increase in the proportion of the aged in the population, the problems of the aged have become formidable. The ultimate responsibility for supporting the aged is shifting from the family to secondary institutions. In these circumstances, it is essential for setting up a large number of Old Age Homes with adequate amenities for those who have no close relatives to look after them. But the coming generation realize that Old Age Homes are not a ‘dumping place’ for the aged.

Finally, the aged should be considered as a valuable cultural resource and role models for the younger generation. Therefore, governmental and non-governmental organizations should come
forward to motivate and create awareness among the youth to take care of the aged in the family. The Old Age Homes are no substitute for families.

The researcher became more enthusiastic and concerned about the issues of the aged in the society as a result of this course work. The services rendered by the senior citizens of the Archdiocese of Changanacherry have been more and more appreciated as the research progressed. More research is needed on the issues of the senior citizens so that the coming generation may be more functional in finding ways of helping the seniors of the society.