

COMMON ISSUES IN AGEING - WHAT OLDER PERSONS ARE SAYING?

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ABSTRACT

CONTEXT

The number of senior citizens is increasing worldwide. In India 8% of population is above 60 years as per census 2011. The peculiarity of growth of senior citizen in India is that first the population is ageing and then country is developing, unlike western countries where countries developed first and then number of senior citizen increased. This phenomenon has huge impact on planning for the needs of growing number of senior citizen. The United Nations declared the theme for international year of older people 2013. "The future we want: what older persons are saying". This is an attempt by policy makers to know what elders wish to convey.

AIM

This study aimed to know the basic problems concerned to social, family and health aspects of senior citizen.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

One hundred and thirty-three literate senior citizens participated and duly filled the questionnaire provided to them. They expressed their views and the same is presented through this study.

RESULTS

The senior literate senior citizen, majority of males in age group of 70-75years have conveyed that there are hidden problems and also good things happening with them. Most of them are happy with their life so far, they have accomplished their responsibilities in better way, and have a pension to take care of financial needs, want to lead a healthy life and wish to donate organs after death. Few feel that there is need for old age homes, very few are subject to abuse and many felt that their decisions should be honoured in the house hold matters.

CONCLUSION

This study expresses the original views of the literate senior citizen regarding their problems related to social, health and family matters. The results bring out the real scenario of life of senior citizen so for the policy makers.

KEYWORDS

Elderly, Social, Family, Health.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE: Ambali AP, Gudage NC, Mulimani MS. Common issues in ageing - what older persons are saying? J. Evid. Based Med. Healthc. 2016; 3(11), 300-304. DOI: 10.18410/jebmh/2016/73

INTRODUCTION: The international day for older people is observed every year worldwide on First October, which is initiated by United Nations. The theme for the year 2013 was "The future we want: what older persons are saying".¹ In this regard the Geriatric Clinic of BLDE University Shri B M. Patil Medical College Hospital and Research Centre took an initiative to know what the older person has to say. As there was no questionnaire supplied by United Nations or an NGO,

Submission 11-01-2016, Peer Review 27-01-2016,

Acceptance 04-02-2016, Published 08-02-2016.

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DOI: 10.18410/jebmh/2016/73

a questionnaire consisting of twenty-two questions was framed by the author, who is a geriatric physician and looks after the geriatric clinic. The first twenty questions had four optional answers common to all, while last two questions were to know the feelings of older people.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The printed questionnaire having twenty-two questions were distributed to the literate senior citizen (>60 years) who were attending geriatric clinic and also to those who are members of various senior citizen forums in Vijayapura. Preliminary data like name, age and sex were asked. Regarding the education status, elderly who has higher educational status and were able to read and understand English were provided the questionnaire. Also the elderly who consented to participate only were included in the study. Most of the elderly participants filled the form in the clinic itself and returned back, few took to their home

and returned next day while many didn't return. The study period was from 01/01/14 to 31/12/14. A total of five hundred forms were printed, because the average senior citizens that include literate and illiterate, attending the geriatric clinic every year is around three hundred, and senior citizen who don't attend geriatric clinic but are part of various senior citizen forums in Vijayapura city were also part of this study. Also the staff members of Medical College who are above 60yrs were included. The questionnaire was distributed over the period of one year. The questionnaire consists of questions which will help understand the social, health and family aspects in life of senior citizen. Also the author wish to know about their willingness to give back to society in form of volunteering, and body donation. We received 240 forms duly filled, out of which only 133 were completely filled. The 107 incompletely filled forms are not considered for analysis. Statistical analysis method used in Mean +/- SD and represented through diagrams.

Study Design: The 22 questions that were asked is given in Table 1.

The questionnaire was printed in English with increased font size for easy reading and handed to senior citizens. They were requested to fill the form and return back.

Table 1:

Name Age Sex
Respected Senior Citizen,
Congratulations! On being the most experienced member of our society.

Please share following information which is gathered to make a memorandum regarding what our senior citizens want in future?

Your opinion is valuable.

This is a sincere effort to understand what our senior citizen want to convey. Don't miss this opportunity. Please answer to all the questions.

Sl. No.	Question	Answer
1	Will you volunteer to serve society, if called?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't Know 4. Not applicable
2	Are you seeking a job after retirement?	
3	Are you availing benefits offered by Government for senior citizen?	
4	Do you feel that there is discrimination between young generation and senior citizen?	
5	Do you get old age pension from government?	
6	Do you think you are burden to your family?	
7	Do you find difficulty in adjusting with your children or grandchildren if they are staying with you?	

8	According to you, society thinks senior citizen are burden to it?	
9	Are you living in own home?	
10	Are you satisfied with your life now?	
11	Do you think, the problems in old age are always projected in negative way in Media?	
12	Do you have difficulties in accessing your pension?	
13	If you are widower / Widow, are you considering for another marriage?	
14	Do you think, there should be old age home in every district?	
15	In your house, do you feel your involvement is must in all decisions taken in house?	
16	In your house, do you feel family members must follow your decision?	
17	In your house, do you feel you must handle all financial aspects?	
18	Do you recommend Immunization against Pneumonia in Elderly should be subsidized and made compulsory?	
19	Do you wish to pledge to donate your organs or whole body after death?	
20	Does your children disrespect you / have cheated you in financial matters/does not allow you to attend social gathering?	

Table 1

21. Which among following is most bothersome in your life now?

1. Your Health.
2. Social Security.
3. Financial security.
4. Living alone.
5. Care of your spouse.

22. What according to you shall be greatest achievement for you by the end of life?

1. Having Lived Independently.
 2. Was role model for many?
 3. Was with Good companion.
 4. Satisfied with accomplishments in life.
 5. Have made elaborate arrangements for your family.
- Thank you for your valuable time and opinion Signature.

RESULTS: A detail analysis of 133 duly filled forms is presented here. Out of 133 elderly participants, 121(91%) were males and 12(9%) were females. Majority of participants were in age group of 70 to 75 years. (Table 2)

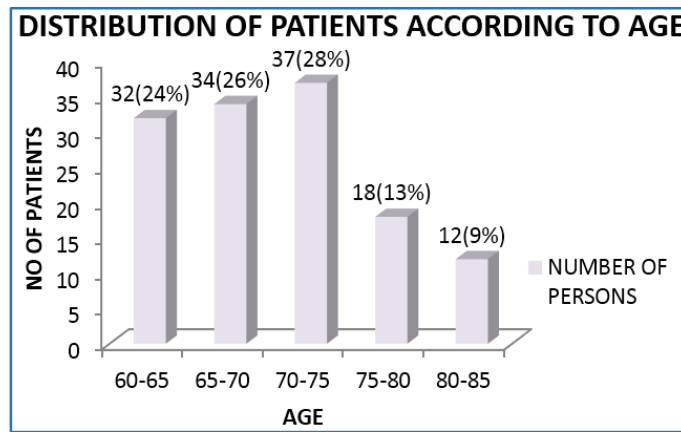


Table 2

This survey revealed interesting things about senior citizens of this part of India which is divided in to three aspects like social, financial and health.

Social aspects:

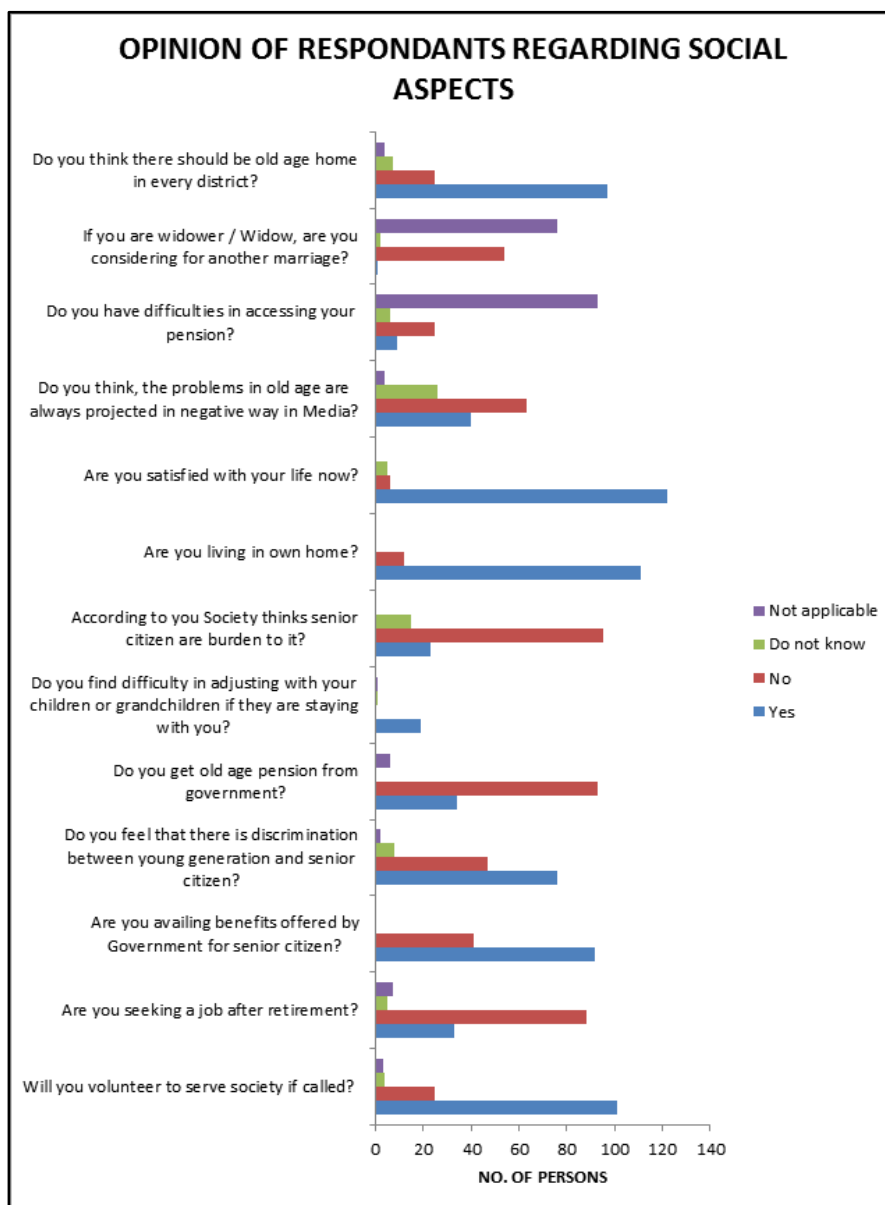


Table 3

It is good to know that 76% of senior are willing to volunteer for a program when called for. The benefits offered by government is utilised only by 69% of participants. Though 25% receive pension, among them 7% have difficulty in accessing the same. Almost 83% own a home and 92% feel that they are satisfied with their life so far. The participants after retirement are in no mood to seek for another job, accordingly 66% said "NO" to the part time job after retirement. Regarding seniors being burden to society, 71% thought that the society might think they may be burden to them, while 91% do not think that they are burden to society. Considering going to old age home, 73% felt need of old age home, which suggest all is not good with seniors. Almost 99% said no to companionship after death of spouse.

Family aspects:

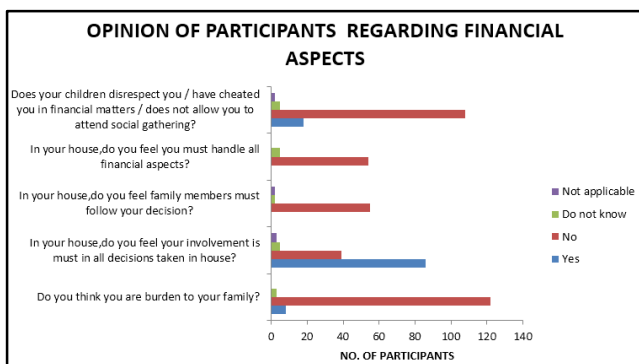


Table 4

The seniors being most experienced and respected person in family feels their involvement in decisions taken in family is vital (64%), while 56% feel their decisions should be followed in house, and 50% still want to control financial aspects. The sad part is 92% feel they are burden to family while 84% had adjustment problems in house. The seniors in house are subject to abuse (13%) which is not a healthy indicator.

When asked about the greatest achievement for them at end of life, 39% felt being satisfied with accomplishment in life while 20% felt elaborate arrangements for the family needs to be done. Having lived independently till end of life is of paramount importance to 14% of seniors. Another important thing noted is 83% of seniors are residing in their own home while 17% in rented home. This itself boost the sense of security in the seniors residing in their own home. As far living arrangement is considered, 84% are living with family and in harmony.

Health aspects:

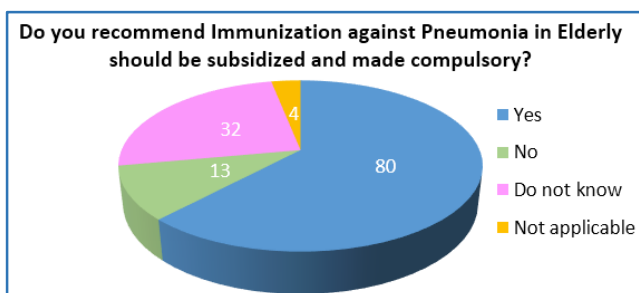


Table 5

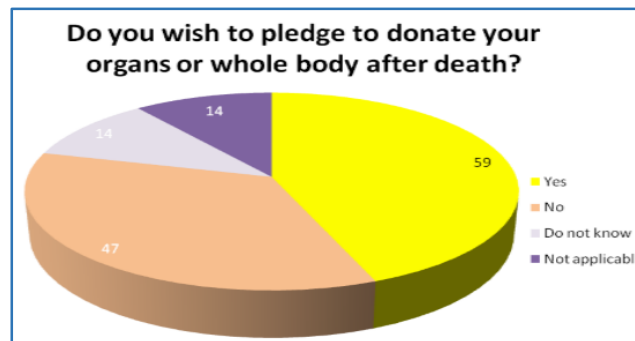


Table 6

The health status is bothersome to 51% of senior participants. As they are spending more on treatment of non-communicable diseases, they feel measures to preventable diseases like pneumonia should be given importance and the vaccines made available at subsidized rates (Table 5). Only 44% of senior had wish to donate organs or whole body after death (Table 6).

DISCUSSION: This study over period of twelve months involved 133 literate senior citizens attending geriatric clinic and those actively involved in various senior citizen forums of Vijayapura. The questionnaire was formed by author out of his experience in field of geriatric medicine. This was one of the method the author thought to know what the older people have in mind and allow them to express it. Through this study the author wish to bring the message to the society on behalf of the literate senior citizens.

According to UNFPA report,² 30% of elderly including men and women receive pension. In this study 25 percent of elderly receive pension. Majority of them depend upon earnings of their own work.

Forty-four percent of elderly residing in urban area own house,² as mentioned in UNFPA report, compared to 83% in this study.

The 12-city study,³ 'State of the Elderly in India 2014', found that one in five elderly persons encounters physical and emotional abuse almost daily, a third around once a week, and a fifth every month.³ In our study, 13% of seniors have been subject to abuse. The prevalence of Elder Abuse in high or middle income countries ranged from 2.2% to 14%.⁴

Regarding role of decision taking in house, women have less say than men. Elderly have say in decision regarding buying property and marriage of children by 31%.² While in this study it is noted that 64 % wish to be a decision maker but it is not clear whether their views are deciding factors in house. According to UNFPA 67% of men felt that their role as a decision maker within the family has remained same, while 86% of participants in this study feel that their decision should be honoured.

According to national survey, less than 11 percent of senior citizen population have a pension of any sort, while 41.9 percent of urban males have either employer insurance or pension schemes.⁵ This study group residing in semi urban area, being well educated and had retired from government service, hence 25% of study group had pension as source of income.

In a study by Mohapatra T,⁶ it is found that 85% of the respondents feel they are burden to family while 91% in this study felt that they are not burden to family. The reason may be that the participants in this study are financially well off.

Worldwide 2.3% of seniors seek for a job after retirement as per UNFPA report,² while 24% in this study look for another job after retirement. Regarding utilisation of government schemes, on 69% of the participants are availing benefits while 34.2% seniors residing in urban area utilised benefits of government schemes according to UNFPA report. The high utility of government schemes in this study is due to majority of participants were government servants. In a study by Sharma S⁷, involving 300 senior citizen, it is found that 73% had health related problems, while 51% had mentioned health is most bothersome to them in this study.

CONCLUSION: The response to the study by the elderly is overwhelming. This study gives a first-hand information about the social, health and family problems of literate senior citizens of this part of India and the way they view their life and their commitments towards society and their family.

The short come of this study is the small number of participants and opinion of only literate senior citizen is considered. In case, translation of questions in local language could have been done but was not feasible. Secondly, the opinion of illiterate elderly would have been taken with help of interpreter, this too was not done to avoid volunteer related bias and false filling by volunteer, as it will not only be difficult to communicate with elderly, it will be more time consuming. Hence the bottom line of theme that what elderly wants to say has been conveyed by elderly themselves without bias through this questionnaire and attempt is made to present the same here. The study reflects various facets of the literate senior citizen in a

community. It conveys that there is a need for strong intergenerational solidarity among the families in India.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Our sincere thanks to Mrs. Vijaya M. Sorganvi, Lecturer in Department of Community Medicine for her help in statistical analysis.

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