

Chapter 21

Physical and Mental Health Issues of Elderly Women in India: A Review

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the aging population is one of the triumphs of humankind. The aging population is now conquering not only developed nations but developing nations too. The inclusion of challenges and problems of the elderly has now been increased, especially for elderly women. It is high time to focus on this vulnerable section, which has been ignored for an extended time. Despite such development of technology, medicines, facilities, and modernization, this weaker section still lay back. Their health and mental status depend on the overall level of care given by their family members and society. Elderly women are facing more health problems than men. Most of them are suffering from chronic diseases. Loneliness is a common psychological problem among all women. The preponderance of widows over widowers among the elderly is a grave issue. Very few of them are taking medical care from medical and non-medical institutions. This chapter explores the physical and mental challenges of elderly women in India.

INTRODUCTION

The aging population shows the stimulating impact of transfiguration progress. A decrease in fecundity prompts a reduction in the extent of the youthful populace. Fertility declined with a decrease in mortality, which upgrades the life expectancy of old ages. In the end, the aged population moves from high

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mortality/high fertility to low mortality/low fertility (Joseph, 2017). Modern lifestyle created barriers for caring for the elderly, and time has become very precious for everyone in this rat race; as a result, elderly people were ignored in the family. The changed family value system, economic compulsions of the children, migration of children neglect and abuse has caused the elderly has been living in old age home (Panday & Kumar, 2017).

Number of older people aged 60 years and above in India has jumped up to 35.5 percent from 76 million in 2001 to 103 million in 2011 (Agewell Foundation, 2017). The population of older adults consists of approximately 9 percent of the total population of India, which was projected to reach up to 20 percent by the year 2050 (Jadhav et al., 2013).

The worldwide statistic shows women live longer than men by 4.4 years by and large somewhere in the range of 2010 and 2015 (life expectancy at birth was 72.7 years for females contrasted with 68.3 years for males). As a result, women made up 54 percent of those aged 60 or over and 61 percent of those aged 80 or over (United Nations, 2015).

Aging is mainly associated with social isolation, poverty, the apparent reduction in family support, inadequate housing, impairment of cognitive functioning, mental illness, widowhood, loss, grief, limited options for living arrangement, and dependency towards the end of life. Generally, at the household level, cultural norms and practices and socio-economic factors determine the extent of health problems among women. Change in socio-economic status and various health problems adversely affect an individual's way of life during old age. The size of the aged Indian population, i.e., who are above 60 years, is rapidly increasing; however, it represents only 7.4% of the total population at the turn of the new millennium. India is a developing country which has comprises of various socio-economic pressures as it includes welfare outlays, medical services, financial control, reserve funds, etc. Overall this segment of the population faces multiple medical and psychological problems (Santhosam & Samuel, 2013).

Agedness is the time of deteriorating one's health, both physical and psychological. It is the time of back support and security needed for older persons. Health issues should be addressed so as it is the primary concern for society as older people are more prone to bad health than younger once. Generally, it claimed that aging is accompanied by multiple illnesses and physical ailments. Other than the physical condition, the aged are bound to be casualties of poor psychological wellness, which emerges from infirmity, depression, and dissatisfaction of life fulfilment. In this way, the wellbeing status of the older people ought to possess a focal spot in any investigation of the old age population.

Active aging should promote as this can be a life saviour activity for older adults. The health sector can induce a crucial role in making an "age-friendly" community. Health strategy is useful in both upstream & downstream efforts, and this can be only possible if professionals of different sectors like policymaker, gerontologists, medical social worker, and researchers involved and communicate each other strength to ensure and make such policy, programs, and a structure which affect the older population positively (Rafi & Saif, 2020).

OBJECTIVES

- To study the existing literature on the physical and mental health issues of elderly women in India.
- To recognize the physical and mental health issues of elderly women in India.
- To give suggestions on the needs and demands of elderly women in India.
- To highlight the role of the social worker in creating awareness of these problems.

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