# A Study on Social Work in Home for the Aged as Perceived by Social Work Student in Tiruchirappalli District

V. Shyam Sundar*
II – MSW HR, Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College
Post Box No. 615, Vayalur Road, Puthur, Tiruchirappalli – 620017

Dr. A. Umesh Samuel Jebaseelan
Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College
Post Box No. 615, Vayalur Road, Puthur, Tiruchirappalli – 620017

**Abstract**
Old age homes are meant for senior citizens who are unable to stay with their families or are destitute. Old age homes have special medical facilities for senior citizens such as mobile health care, ambulances, nurses and provision of well-balanced meals. The last century has witnessed a rapid increase in the population of the elderly people in the developed and industrialized countries. This situation could be attributed to a combination of factors such as increase in age, longevity and decreased death rates due to advancement in the field of medicine, improvement of life expectancy at birth, and enhancement in the average span of life. India ranks 4th in terms of absolute size of the elderly population. The country is not adequately equipped to look after their special health needs and the changing traditional value system. In the above context, a study was conducted to understand the feeling of the elderly residing in the old age homes and within the family setup in Tiruchirappalli District. The present paper attempts to portrait various problems experienced by the old age people. The paper also explains the social work intervention of Case Work, Group Work and Community Organization Programme in case of old age people. Results of the study revealed that most of the elderly people felt that the attitude of the younger generation is unsatisfactory towards them in terms of getting respect, love and affection from the family members instead they were considered as a burden for others. Women living in the families had a positive attitude towards the old age. There was a fall in the overall efficiency, sociability, degree of involvement in work and hobbies. On the other hand, better social relations were maintained by the family because they had regular interaction, expressions of feelings and support as a family. The present paper aims to highlight the problems of the aged as perceived by Social Work Student.
**Keywords:** Old Age Home. Family. Life Expectancy. Methods of Social Work.

## 1. Introduction

The advancements in medical science get the average life span of the people. Increasing health consciousness and attention with regard to diet should be responsible for the good health. People who are above sixty exceed the number of younger people. The markets of today are poised to come up with numerous retirement homes where the elderly are allowed to retire peacefully. People who require a high level of care generally require nursing home accommodation. People who require low-level care may be more suited to hostel care. The latest figures indicate approximately a third of residents were in low care and two-thirds were in high care. Changing family value system, economic compulsions of the children, neglect and abuse has caused elders to fall through the net of family care. Homes for the Aged are ideal for elderly people who are alone, face health problems, depression and loneliness.

### 1.1. Reason for admitting Old Age people in Home
#### 1.1.1. Health Care

It is difficult to find improvement in old age people's health. The health care is more useful for the old age people to take care of the old age people problems regarding health issues. Some issues like dementia, incontinence and many other health problems will be cured by experts. The main duty of the care taker is to managing medications, keeping track of doctors' appointments, coping with changes in behaviour and lifting and moving the old age people. This process can only be done by the nursing home where the experts can take care of the old age people.

#### 1.1.2. Personal Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the people meaningfully limit the amount of time which can be used for caring the old age people. The role of caregiver often causes stress, draining on family relationships, interrupt in the involvement of other activities and changes in the sleeping pattern. The situation is even more draining when we have a stressed relationship with the parent or when the person's condition includes challenging symptoms. The only way is to consider finding a nursing home where old age people can remain actively involved in making decisions about their future.

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### 1.1.3. Personal Restrictions

Caring for old age people require a great deal of time and energy. It may be physically damaging to take on the responsibility if we are simultaneously coping with own medical problems. A personal injury or illness is often accompanied by medical expenses or low income. The health care costs for old age people and this can quickly become irresistible and lead to financial draining.

## 2. Problem faced by Inmates

In India, there are many old age people staying at the homes. They are facing many problems which cannot be solved. This is due to unacceptable situations in the old age homes. Most of the problems faced by inmates are differences in caste, religion and culture. People cannot get food at proper timing. It is difficult for the old age people to socialize with other members. Some people facing medical problems are in need of assistance but due to the lack of professionals they suffer a lot. Most of the people create their own boundaries where they did not allow other members to stay. Moreover, they are mentally stressed for not visiting their friends and families. These stress factors will get increased and at one point they become exhausted. There the conflict between members arises. Due to the overcrowding inmates they feel uncomfortable to stay in the homes. Intake of nutritious food is more important for the old age people but due to lack of funds they get normal food that too in small quantity. Sometimes people face water scarcity in the homes. During that time many people used to avoid taking bath which leads to many infections that can harm other inmates. During the rainy season people suffer from cold. The small insects and mosquitoes will be large in numbers which reduce sleeping time of people.

Sometimes visitors visit the old age home at their happiest occasions like Birthday, Wedding day, remembering of the family members or at any festival times. They bring some blankets, food items, sweets and some other products which are needed by the inmates. At that time there is a clash between the inmates to get that product. Indian government helps those poor people by implementing various schemes like National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAP), which was introduced to provide Rupees 200 per month to the old and destitute people. But money cannot take place of emotional support, care etc. In 2007, The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizen Act (Senior Citizen Act) is enacted to provide some speedy and inexpensive remedy to get maintenance. The bill provides for

a)  Provide need-based maintenance to the senior citizens
b)   Providing better medical facilities to old age people
c)   For institutionalization of a suitable, mechanism for protecting the life of the older persons
d)   Setting-up of old age homes in every district

### 2.1 Statistics of Old Age People

There are approximately 728 Old Age Homes in India. Kerala has 124 old age homes which is higher in comparison to any other state. India ranks 4th in terms of the size of the elderly population.

India will be the youngest country in the world by 2020 with a median age of 29 years, the number of elderly people is likely to increase significantly after that, according to the 2014 State of Elderly in India report released by the non-profit organization.

By 2021, the elderly in the country will number 143 million. Presently, the elderly are divided into three categories: the young old (60-70), the middle-aged old (70-80) and the oldest old (80 plus). The increase in life expectancy over the years has resulted in an increase in the population of the elderly. While the overall population of India will grow by 40% between 2006 and 2050, the population of those aged 60 and above will increase by 270%. Out of this, the oldest old segment, which is the most vulnerable on account of suffering from disabilities, diseases, terminal illness and dementia, is also the largest growing segment of the elderly population, at a rate of 500%. The increasing population of the elderly is "A development concern that warrants priority attention for economic and social policies to become senior citizen friendly."

Moreover, the government has formulated the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension, under which it provides a paltry amount of Rs.200 to the elderly belonging to poor families. It has asked the State Governments to share this responsibility though the level of implementation varies.

## 3. Theoretical Perspectives for Social Work with Older People

Social Work intervention with older people is underpinned by a range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, which guide professional practice.

### 3.1. Systems Theory

Social Work with older people is frequently concerned with the persons':
A. Informal or natural systems such as family, careers, friends and neighbours
B. Formal systems such as community supports or structures which provide more specialized help than that available in informal systems

C. Societal systems such as hospitals, health professionals, Day Care Centers, etc. Problems can be caused not only by some issue internal to the person but by a breakdown in the interactions between the older person and any of these systems. The role of the Social Worker is to assess where the cause of the conflict arises and to mediate between the client and the resource system in question.

### 3.2. Strengths Perspective

The conceptual framework for the strengths model of practice with older people build the resilience that clients have developed from coping with previous adversity in the lives, and it strives to place self-determination as the central value. This approach recognizes and promotes the worth, dignity and uniqueness of older people in the face of social attitudes that can sometimes marginalize them. Assessment is holistic and ensures older people are not viewed in terms of their functional limitations and disabilities. Older people can be supported in their desire to live at home by the provision of social support without undermining the client's self-esteem and dignity. Frail or disabled older people have the right to be involved in decisions about long-term care and clients with cognitive impairment should also be afforded as many choices as possible.

### 3.3. Crisis Intervention

Often, the contact between Social Worker and the client occurs at a stage of crisis which can be the onset of critical illness, sudden loss or other life transitions where the older person's normal coping strategies are no longer sufficient to manage the current stressors. Crisis intervention theory is based on psychodynamic ego-psychology and its focus is on increasing the client's emotional capacity to deal with the problem.

### 3.4. Task-Centred

Task-centered practice is a systematic and goal-directed framework where the Social Work intervention is time limited. The focus is mainly on the "here and now" and task centred practice deals with eight problem areas which are psychosocial in nature and can affect many older clients:
1) Interpersonal conflict
2) Dissatisfaction with social relations
3) Problems with formal organizations
4) Difficulties in role performance
5) Problems of social transition
6) Reactive emotional distress
7) Inadequate resources
8) Behavioral problems

### 3.5. Brief Solution-Focused Therapy

A solution-focused approach has features in common with a task-centred approach. However, task-centred methods look at understanding problems and ways of resolving them, while solution-focused work focuses on solutions. With this approach the emphasis is on identifying the times when the problem is less acute and focusing on these problem-free times, i.e. exceptions to the problem. The "miracle question" and scaled questions are an integral part of assisting the client in identifying solutions. Solution-focused work is anti-oppressive and empowering in its application and avoids pathologizing clients.

### 3.6. Emancipatory Practice

Emancipatory practice refers to a practice which seeks to tackle discrimination, inequality and exclusion. Older people can be the subject of some forms of discrimination and can internalize ageist values, so great care needs to be taken to ensure that Social Work interventions reduce or undermine discrimination rather than reinforce or exacerbate it. Assessments and interventions should avoid stereotypes and assumptions, and as Social 10 Workers we need to work within a partnership and empowerment model and in an anti-oppressive framework, which enables people to engage fully in decision-making processes.

### 3.7. Counselling

Theories of counselling in health care settings stress the interaction between disease, the individual, the family, health care providers and other systems. This derives from a bio-psychosocial systems perspective. Older persons' coping can be enhanced by enabling informed decision-making and by helping people to view their situation from different perspectives. Psychosocial Theory, based on Freudian personality, and Behavioral Social Work, based on Learning Theory, can be used in some Social Work interventions with older people, but generally with a less wide application than other models of practice.

## 4. Role of Social Worker

- ❖ The Role of Social workers is to work with older people in acute hospital or rehabilitation services, in public residential facilities, in Local Authorities, in community units, in psychiatry of old age, adult learning disability services, where there are defined teams and supervision structures.
- ❖ Social workers who are employed in homes for the elderly perform a number of functions, including helping older adults adjust to life in their new residences, advocating for their clients' needs and rights, providing supportive counselling and making psychosocial assessments.
- ❖ The professionals, known as geriatric social workers, work in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and similar environments.

### 4.1 Task of Social Worker
### 4.1.1 Psychosocial Assessments

When a resident is first admitted to an elderly home, a social worker will perform a psychosocial assessment to determine the level of care required and to assess whether specific services, such as counselling or psychiatric intervention, are needed. The purpose of a psychosocial assessment is to evaluate the person's biological, psychological and social needs, according to the National Association of Social Workers. After an assessment is completed, the social worker discusses her findings with an interdisciplinary team, which usually consists of medical staff, occupational therapists, physical therapists and other professionals, to collaborate on formulating a treatment plan to address the resident's needs.

### 4.1.2. Counseling

Social workers also help residents adjust to life in their new homes. Adjusting to life in a supportive care setting can be difficult and challenging for those used to living independently. A social worker provides individual and group counselling as needed to help her/his clients overcome potential emotional, psychological and social obstacles to adjustment. If the facility does not provide certain services, such as psychiatric care, the social worker will refer her client to the appropriate resources and professionals.

### 4.1.3. Advocacy

Social workers advocate for their clients to ensure that their needs are met and that their rights are protected. Social workers who work in elderly homes should stay up-to-date with legislative changes and policies that can affect their clients. They are responsible for ensuring that residents are protected from abuse and neglect, and should report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to facility administrators and to appropriate regulatory and law enforcement officials.

### 4.1.4. Education

In addition to educating their clients and their families about their rights and responsibilities, social workers also educate staff about the psychosocial needs of residents and provide training on multicultural and diversity issues. Social workers may conduct staff training seminars on these topics or discuss concerns as they arise with individual staff members. Social workers also provide consultation to the facility's administration to discuss relevant issues, such as the delivery of psychosocial care, as needed.

## 5. Methods of Social Work

There are basically three direct methods of social work
- ✓ Case Work
- ✓ Group Work
- ✓ Community Organization

### 5.1 Case Work
### 5.1.1 Sample 1:

A client had a Nervous Weakness. She believed in God and believed that God will help her for good life. Thinking of words used by the client's brother. She had unwanted stress and fear. The client's father was no more.  The client started crying by thinking of her past life. She was a vegetable vendor in Delhi. But now she cannot afford to live in the Old age home. The client would express anger while talking about her brother.

### 5.1.2 Sample 2:

A client was taking unwanted over responsibility. He used to think a lot about his family members. He had a misguided feeling of Mnemophobia (fear of memory loss). The Client had hard feelings on his son due to the will problem. The supportive family members of the client are his wife and step-son. So the client himself decided to stay in the home.

### 5.1.3     Sample 3:

The Client does not realize the effect of actions for whatever he does.  The client has less responsibility. The client didn't care for his family. He had neither link nor support from their family. His wish was to live alone.

*5.1.4    Sample 4:*

The client has more carelessness, lazy, Negative thought & not using the time properly. The client had phasmophobia (been termed to possess an evil spirit which goes rise to fear of ghost). Some members in the Home misunderstand the client as she believes in Ghost. The client did not like her husband due to his rude behaviour. A client likes to live in the Old age home peacefully.

*5.1.5    Sample 5:*

The client consumes Alcoholism every night. It created many problems in their family. Some of his street friends consume alcoholism. The client has learned to consume alcoholism from his street friends to forget the past incidents. The client did not like his wife due to the rude behaviour. The client liked to live in the Old age home peacefully.

*5.1.6    Sample 6:*

The student conducted a survey for the Recreational Group work activity. This activity was for a Closed Group and it was Heterogeneous. The task in the activity was that the members should participate actively and coordinate with the group. Its objective was to make the members mingle with their Inmates and make the old age people mingle with the present social environment.

*5.1.7    Sample 7:*

The student conducted a survey for the Education Group work activity. This activity was for a Closed Group and it was Heterogeneous. The task in the activity was members should participate actively and coordinate in the group. Its objective was to make Healthy well-being and increase their concentration & interest.

## 6. Community Organization

The programme conducted by the student was Physiotherapist Exercise for the Inmates. Its aims were
- ✓ To create awareness about Physiotherapist Exercise to the Old Age people
- ✓ To make the members know about the importance of health
- ✓ To make aware of the negative impacts of junk foods.
- ✓ Throw light on Importance of food timings
- ✓ Promote importance of nutritious food

## 7 Conclusion

Hereby, I conclude that the older ones and the existence of younger ones are part of the cyclic biological process. Old age people need care, love and healthy emotional family sharing for satisfaction. Just as new born babies need growth and success in today's competitive world, older people need a feeling of belongingness to get by in the current world. These objectives are to be strategically balanced. Old age people care should have to increase and the government provides necessary facilities to that homes. They should be included in the family running process so that they could feel not ignored.

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