

A Study on Mental Efficiency of Rural Older Women

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Abstract

Old age is a precious period of every one's life because they have an opportunity to reflect their life experiences. Freud has also mentioned that the behavior of the person is influenced by the childhood experiences. Old age is a stage, when people move away from previous to more desirable period to less desirable period. The social attitudes toward the elderly are more important because it reflects the social treatment of the senior citizens and it is every old person's responsibility to improve the self concept. The declination of mental ability of older persons depends on individual differences and environment. The present research study has focused on the female elderly with regard to their mental efficiency. The aim and objectives of the study is to identify the socio demographic profile of the older persons and to analyze the mental efficiency and to suggest the suitable measures to enhance the mental efficiency of the older women. Interview schedule method was adopted to collect the required data from the respondents. This study was carried out at Asoor village of Perambalur district and purposive sampling method was used to collect the data from 55 respondents. The major findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents (74.5%) have moderate level of depression and mental efficiency.

Keywords: Mental efficiency, elderly, depression, memory functions.

Introduction

The definition of the aged officially accepted in India was 55 years-the age of superannuation when the employees retired from service. The determination of the old age naturally linked with the average life expectancy (Johri, 2005). Sinding (2011) have explained the reasons for the increased number of older persons that it was due to an increase in longevity and a decline in fertility rates over the last two decades have resulted in a rapid increase in the older population and a decrease in birth rates. Industrialization, urbanization and nuclearisation of the family have also focused the aged as social problem and also poverty, unemployment, underemployment and

inflation have rendered the family members unable to discharge their duties to the aged(Baldwin, 2002). The generation gap is winding. It is also indicated that the elderly people find difficult to adjust with their own sons and daughters because of the generation gap and their raring perception and because of this they suffer from various social, psychological and emotional problems. Ladusingh (2013) have identified that the number of older female do live longer than their male counterparts, there would be astonishingly high number of elderly widows in the world because they able to cope with the crisis and changing environment. Women face lot of

problems in their life time and it goes without saying that problems of older women who are dwelling in rural areas is still more worse. Mental efficiency is commonly understood as person ability to do the task within the given period of time without the loss of time and energy. Thomas et., al (2002) defined that the cognition is a broad range of largely invisible activities carried out by the human brain such as perceiving, thinking, knowing, reasoning, remembering, analyzing, planning, and paying attention, generating and synthesizing ideas, creating, judging, being aware and having insight. Cognition includes any and all processes by which a person becomes aware of his/her situation, needs, goals, and required actions, and uses this information to implement problem solving strategies for optimal living. It is also predicted that the health problems of the older persons is due to neglect, poor economic status, social deprivation and inappropriate dietary intake and as age increase physical illness onsets. Thus the researcher has planned to study the mental efficiency of rural older women and it is hoped that the findings of the study would provide comprehensive information about the status of rural older women as well as their mental efficiency.

Review of Literature

Hedden and Gabrieli (2004) have studied the cognitive changes of aging. It proved that the neural changes are associated with cognitive changes of aging. The first component involves changes in the frontostriatal system, broadly associated with executive abilities and adaptation

to new environmental inputs and changes in one's physical and mental self, and the second, changes in the medial temporal lobes and the bidirectional relays that link the hippocampus and association cortices. The study was concluded that the living alone is associated with loneliness, poor psychological well-being and depression. Chiaravalloti and DeLuca (2008) have found that the cognitive deficits are associated with functional impairment in everyday life, independent effects of depression, fatigue, and motor disability. Thimmanna and Sedamkar (2014) have focused on the problems of the women elderly .The study consisted of elderly population of more than 60 years, more than half of the population constitutes of women. The study found that the elderly women do not have economic security, lack of ownership to properties, lack of respect by younger, and the elderly women are suffering from many of the problems in society. In slum areas and in rural areas women suffer from many problems because as they are illiterates and neglected. It is concluded that not many innovative and useful welfare schemes are formulated by Government for the welfare of the weaker sections such as elderly, children and women. But, elderly women have more problems and are not aware about welfare schemes .These problems should be intervened by NGOs and Government jointly. Antony (2013) has conducted a study on mental efficiency of selected elderly. The study was conducted at Ernakulam which has quite large number of older age homes and free living elderly. The objective of the study was to compare the

memory levels, mental status, perceptual motor activity, depression of the elderly residing with the family and those residing in institution. The study found that there is no significant difference between memory efficiency which indicates that memory decline is a part and parcel of ageing process and also found that poor mental health status was prevalent in the elderly residing at institution. The study concluded that the higher level of depression is present in the institutionalized older person than the family living older person. Bharth (2015) have compared the mental efficiency of male and female elderly in Aurangabad. The researcher selected a 120 male and female elderly from various mental health care centers in Aurangabad city. The researcher used a PGI battery by Adhrash Kohli et al for assessment of mental efficiency in the elderly. The researcher found that there are three levels in mental efficiency and shows that differences between male and female elderly and depression level shows no differences in male and female elderly.

Research Methodology

The aim of the present study is to analyze the mental efficiency of the rural older women residing at perambalur district. The objectives of the study is to understand the socio demographic profile of the older women, to study the mental efficiency of rural older women and also to suggest suitable measures to enhance the mental efficiency of the older women. The area selected for the study was Asoor Village of Perambalur District which has quite a large number of older

persons. The sample comprised of 55 female elderly aged 60 and above were selected for the study. The PGI- Battery for mental efficiency scale was used for the study and it consists of four dimensions. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to collect the data and interview schedule was used to collect the information about the respondents and their mental efficiency.

Results and Discussion

It is clear from the analysis that majority of the respondents (67.2%) were between the age group of 60-70 years whereas 23.6 per cent of the respondents were between the age group of 71-80 years, only few percent of the respondents (9.1%) come under the age group of 81 & above. It is inferred that majority of the respondents (65.5%) lived in joint family system and 34.5% per cent of the respondents lived alone. Joint family system is a back bone for behavioral development of the younger generation and it also enhances the mental health status of the older persons. A similarly study by Ramamurti, (2002) revealed that joint family, kinship, value system in the past ensured emotional help, physical security and social support to the aged. It is focused that majority of the respondents (81.8%) are living with their spouse. In this context Whisman et al., (2006) have reported that the role of spouse to be very strongest predictor of life satisfaction and 18.8 per cent of the respondents spouse prone to chronic disease due to their age factor and the care giving burden goes to older women. It is evident that majority of the respondents (80%) consume vegetarian and non-vegetarian products. The health status of the older persons is based on their

food consumption but at this stage for most of the older persons it is needed to stick on diet because they are prone to various diseases. It hinders their interest to eat variety of food. Dean et al, 2000 have also said that the dental health, mobility, ability to taste and smell, good storage facilities and family support were important to individual's satisfaction along with food-related life satisfaction. It could also be predicted by income, health measures and living circumstances. It is noted that 36.3 per cent of the respondents spent their time by watching TV, peer group chatting and 27.2 per cent of the respondents spent their time with their grand children. It is understood that majority of the respondents (80.8%) like to enjoy nature and 19.2 per cent of the respondents are not interested in spending time with the nature a natural environment. It helps them to overcome their stressful life events. A study by Malthe et al.,(2015) predicted that the higher exposure to natural environments (green space and gardens) was associated with fewer mental disorders among older people. The study also suggested that the provision of green environment in local areas could be a potential intervention to improve the mental health among older persons.

It is evident from the study that nearly majority of the respondents (57.5) have moderate level damage in brain, whereas 40.3 per cent of the respondents have high level of brain damage and it is due to age and physical and health conditions, very few respondents (22%) have low level of brain damage and this is because they are in the early stage of ageing. It is observed from the study

that great majority of the respondents (84%) of the respondents have high level of ability towards perceptual motor acuity and 16 per cent of them have low level of perceptual ability. Regarding the overall score of mental efficiency little less than half of the respondents (48.4%) have moderate level of mental efficiency whereas more or less equal numbers of respondents (26.3% and 25.3%) have low as well as high level of mental efficiency from this study it is clear that as age increases there will be decline in mental efficiency.

Suggestions

1. Nutritious diet will not only improve their physical health but also stimulate the mental functioning.
2. Regular exercises on observation and concentration may improve the mental efficiency of older people.
3. Community care clinics for older person plays a vital role in their active engagement and it also provides an opportunity to share their emotions and feelings.
4. Spending their leisure time effectively will reduce their stress. Hence the older person involving gardening, chatting, sharing of experiences, walking, listening to music etc.
5. Yoga and meditation play a vital role in improving the mental health of older people.
6. Social support and social net work improve their life satisfaction as well as their acquaintances.
7. Continuing their hobbies and interest may improve their mental efficiency

Conclusion

The present study has brought to light the various aspects of mental efficiency of the older persons. The lack of family support, economic dependency, poor physical health, care giving and urbanization were the main reasons for depression and loneliness feeling of the older persons. Especially, the elderly women were felt depressed due to the feeling of economical insecurity and grief. The government must place for leisure time activities of the older persons and encourage the younger generation to take care of their parents without the feeling of burden. As the older persons enter second childhood duty it is sole responsibility of any family members and government is take care of the older people. It is the government duty to plan proper and implementing welfare programmes for the well being of the older persons.

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