

Impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone in Chandigarh

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In the era of development, elderly women living alone are facing problems. Due to development and migration, children move to other cities and starts living in the nuclear family set up. Here, elderly women who are physically and mentally dependent on their children are left behind. They face different type of problems in their day to day life, loneliness is one of them. Impact of development on loneliness has made the life of elderly women more vulnerable. The paper focused upon impact of development on loneliness among elderly women that are living alone. The main objectives of the study were to find out the profile of the elderly women and to highlight the impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone in the society. An empirical study was done through the non-probability sampling and 30 elderly women were selected with the help of snow ball method. Data was collected through interview schedule. It was found that a large number of the elderly women were facing a moderate level of loneliness followed by a complete loneliness. Thus, impact of development was reported by elderly women. It can be concluded that development is a process of social change which can affect the society positively as well as negatively. In the case of elderly women living alone, development has affected negatively as they face more loneliness.

Keywords: development, loneliness and elderly women

Population of the elderly is increasing in India. All elderly persons do not constitute a homogeneous category as they are from different age groups. The problems of elderly women may vary from those who live with their spouses. The situation is worse when one of the spouses is missing. In the era of development, elderly women are facing more problems. Due to development and migration, children move to other cities and starts living in the nuclear family set up. Here, elderly women who are physically and mentally dependent on their children are left behind. They face different type of problems in their day to day life, loneliness is one of them. Studies also show that elderly persons have to face the problem of loneliness. Lopata (1980) it has been stated that the after the death of the spouse social status of elderly women gets changed which further contributes to the feeling of loneliness. The experience of widowhood means missing the relationship with the partner and participating in every social event together. Lund et al. (1993) it has been argued that loneliness was the main problem which was faced by elderly widowed persons. Dykstra and De Jong Gierveld (2004) have also found that impact of marital status and gender for both emotional and social loneliness. Baumbusch (2004) it has been noticed that lack of companionship, social support and intimacies emerges as negative aspects of singlehood and were often interpreted as loneliness. National survey of family and households (1988) indicated that both loneliness and depression were significantly related to childlessness for elderly women than men. WVRS (2012) it has been found that there were 17 percent of people aged 75 to 79 years were reported that they feel lonely; this figure rises to over 63 percent in those aged 80 and over. Singh and Mishra (2012) it has been found that there was no significant relation between loneliness and sociability as being social elderly persons also experience feeling of loneliness. Katz (1983) has stated that the concepts of living alone and loneliness were often used interchangeably. So, there

is a possibility that living alone can increase the risk of loneliness. It can also be said that not all the elderly persons living alone feel lonely and vice versa. Mehta (1996) has stated that longevity in women may results more widows than widowers. She also found that there were higher rates of remarriage among widowers than widows. Though, there is a possibility of more women in living alone situation.

Studies show that age, marital status and living arrangements affect the life of elderly people. Elderly persons, especially women have been neglected because our society is passing through a process of development. Individualistic nature as a result of development may be counted for the reason behind the neglecting of elderly persons. When development takes place in the society, some negative impacts along with positive change can be seen in the society. Loneliness among elderly persons is one of these negative impacts. It is more problematic in the case of elderly women living alone. According to a Report of WHO (2007), the highest proportions of elderly women are in developed countries, and a majority live in developing countries, where population of aging is increasing. It has been noticed that there are many studies on various factors which affects the elderly population especially elderly women in the western countries. But in India, there is dearth of such studies which show the impact on development on elderly women. In this context the present study was conducted in Chandigarh to highlight the impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone, where the process of development is going on.

Elderly persons

A number of terms have been used to describe people considered as elderly. Some gerontologists have used the terms 'elderly' and 'senior citizen' as inadequate generalizations. The United Nations considers those persons who are over the age of 65 years as elderly. The Indian Census considers persons above the age of 60 years and above as elderly. Indian demographers while studying the demographic and socio-economic aspects of elderly have used the proportion of persons of age 60 and above as an indicator of ageing.

Development

In simple terms development means a changing situation. As change is a process, development is also a process towards a desirable place in society. Whether this place is achieved in the short or long term, change has several implications for the society. Thomas (2000, 2004) has referred development as 'a process of historical change'. He has stated that development is a good change. All countries and societies change over a period of time, and generally experience economic as well as societal change. In this conceptualization, development can be related to diverse socioeconomic changes. Thus, development is a process of social change, it is not merely a set of policies and programs instituted for some specific results. Due to the huge development in the developing countries like as India, it can no longer be assumed that only traditional values are predominating. The values and ethics have been changed with the change in the society. In this, situation elderly women have been left behind seeking help from others. So, this development has affected the life of elderly women the most.

Loneliness

Loneliness is a major problem for the elderly persons. The study of loneliness raises a number of issues and problems. In simple terms loneliness is recognized as emotions of the person of being alone. "It is a situation in which number of existing relationship is smaller than is considered desirable or admissible, as well as a situation where as close one wishes hasn't been realized" (De Jong Gierveld, 1987:120).

Elderly persons, especially women have been neglected in the era of development. Individualism can lead to loneliness among elderly women living alone. Thus, the present study focuses on this section of the society which is neglected in the phase of development.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study were to find out the profile of the elderly women and to highlight the impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone in the society.

Method

For this purpose, an empirical study was done through the non-probability sampling and 30 elderly women were selected with the help of snow ball method.

Participants

For the present study, elderly women who were above the age of 60 years were taken. Those elderly women were living alone were taken which included widows; divorced and unmarried elderly women.

Instrument

The data was collected with the help of Interview schedule. The interview schedule also consists of a self made Three Point Likert Scale to measure loneliness among elderly women. There were 10 statements on the scale.

Procedure and analysis

A self made Likert scale was used to measure loneliness. Information on Profile of the respondents was gathered with the help of interview schedule which included questions on Age, Caste, Religion, Background, Marital status, Educational background, Occupational Background and Income. In this regard, an attempt has been made to find out the profile and loneliness among the elderly women living alone.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Response	No.	%
Age		
60-70	7	23.3
70-80	21	70.0
80+	2	6.7
Caste		
Reserved	4	13.3
Unreserved	26	86.7
Religion		
Hindus	17	56.7
Muslims	4	13.3
Sikhs	9	30.0
Background		
Rural	6	20.0
Urban	24	80.0
Marital status		
Widowed	10	33.3
Divorced	10	33.3
Unmarried	10	33.3
Educational background		
Illiterate	3	10.0
Matriculation	7	23.3
Higher	13	43.3
Graduation	7	23.3
Occupational background		
Government	14	46.7
Private	7	23.3
Not applicable*	9	30.0
Income		
<10,000	9	30.0
10,000-20,000	10	33.3
20,000-30,000	8	26.7
30,000>	3	10.0

*those respondents who didn't work were kept in the category of not applicable.

Scoring instructions for Loneliness Scale: there were 10 statements on the scale which consists both positive and negative statements.

For the positive statements scoring was done as following:

Always=3, Sometimes=2 and Never=1.

For the negative statements scoring was done as following:

Always=1, Sometimes=2 and Never=3.

Table 2: The statements on the Scale

Sr.	Statements
1.	How often do you think that there is always someone you can talk to about your day to day problems?
2.	How often do you miss having friends?
3.	How often do you experience a general sense of emptiness in the era of development?
4.	How often do you think that you are disconnected?
5.	How often do you miss company of relatives?
6.	How often do you find your circle is too limited?
7.	How often do you think there are many people you can trust completely?
8.	How often do you miss having people around due to development?
9.	How often do you feel that you are no longer close to anyone because people are busy in themselves?
10.	How often do you think that people around you share your interests and idea due to individualism?

The responses given by the respondents to the statements were calculated and scores were given on the basis of these responses. Thus, the score ranged in between 3-30. After calculating the score, they were arranged in the ascending order and quartile was calculated in order to find out loneliness. Following table will show the quartile and scores given to the responses.

Table 3: Score taken on the basis of 10 statements for Loneliness

Scores	Frequency	Cumulative frequency	
5	3	3	
6	3	6	
7	3	9	Q1
8	2	11	
9	2	13	
10	1	14	
16	1	15	
17	1	16	
18	1	17	
19	1	18	
20	4	22	
21	1	23	Q3
22	2	25	
26	1	26	
27	2	28	
28	2	30	
Total	30		

On the basis of distribution, respondents with the score in between 5-9 were included in the complete loneliness, those with the score in between 9-23 were included in the moderate level of loneliness and those who acquired the score in between 24-28 were included in no loneliness category. Thus, the distribution is divided into three categories. The redistribution sample according to loneliness scale came to be Complete Loneliness, Moderate level of Loneliness and No Loneliness.

Table 4: Level of Loneliness among the Respondents

Level of loneliness	Frequency	%
Complete loneliness	9	30.0
Moderate loneliness	14	46.7
No loneliness	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

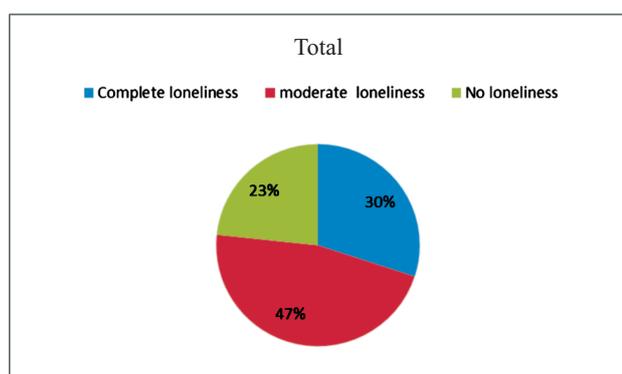


Figure 1: Level of Loneliness among the Respondents

Analysis of the data

The results show that a majority of the respondents i.e. 70 percent

were from the age group of 70-80 years followed by age group of 60-70 and then age group of 80 years and above. It was found that a majority of the respondents i.e. 86.7 percent were belonging to the unreserved caste background whereas only 13.3 percent respondents were belonging to the reserved caste background. A large number of the respondents were belonging to the Hindu Religion (i.e. 56.7 percent) followed by 30 percent Sikh and 13.3 percent Muslim religious background. A majority of the respondents (i.e. 80 percent) were from the urban background. An equal number of widows, divorced and unmarried respondents were there in the study (i.e. 33.3 percent). Most of the respondents were found literate whereas, 10 percent of the respondents were illiterate in the present study. It was found that more respondents (i.e. 46.7 percent) were working in Government sector before their retirement, 23.3 percent were in Private sector and 30 percent of the respondents did not work in their life time. The findings show that a majority of the respondents did a job before entering in old age. It was found that more respondents were getting income Rs. 10,000-20,000 per month (i.e. 33.3 percent) followed by those who were getting Rs. 10,000 per month (i.e. 30 percent). On the further analysis, it was found that those elderly women who didn't work were getting pension from the social welfare department and pension of the deceased spouses.

Social isolation, loneliness and lack of support system are the risk factors for the elderly women living alone in the era of development. The information was gathered to find out the influence of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone. The data show that a large number of the respondents reported (i.e. 46.7 percent) a moderate level of loneliness. They feel loneliness sometimes. There were 30 percent respondents who reported a complete loneliness. They feel loneliness all the time. Further, 23.3 percent of the respondents refused that they face loneliness. The data show that more respondents were found to face a moderate level of loneliness followed by those who were facing a complete loneliness. Thus, the results show that there is an impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone in the society.

Major findings

- The results show that there were 30 percent elderly women who reported a complete level of loneliness. Social Development in the society has affected the life of elderly women and made their condition more vulnerable.
- The data also highlights that there were 46.7 percent of the respondents who have showed a moderate level of loneliness. They tried to divert their mind in their day to day routine but they also feel loneliness moderately.
- The data shows that there were 10 percent of the respondents who showed no loneliness. They were living a happy life and satisfied with the life. Because they were aware that the development is taking place and the time of this era of development they were less regarded and they have accepted the reality.

Discussion

Information was collected from 30 elderly women living alone from Chandigarh having rural and urban background. The aim of the study was to investigate the profile of the respondents and to find out the impact of development on loneliness among elderly women living alone. The findings of the present study show that more elderly were from the middle old age group. All the respondents

were belonging to the different socio-economic groups. The paper highlights that maximum number of the elderly women population is facing loneliness one or other way due to the influence of development. According to Andrews et al. (1986; 46), loneliness was found 7 percent among elderly in Philippines, 10 percent in Malaysia, 22 percent in the Republic of Korea and 24 percent in Fiji. Present study also found that there were 30 percent elderly women were facing the problem of complete loneliness. The structure of family size has been reduced due to migration, urbanization and individualism. The population which is left behind is elderly population and this part of the population is doubled vulnerable when elderly is women. So, there is need of the special policies for elderly women especially for those who are living alone and feel helpless. The conclusion is basically elderly women living alone are facing loneliness and loneliness is also the cause of other problems in their day to day life. On the basis of these findings this is intended to emphasize that the issues of elderly women should consider in the development and application of a service the intrinsic characteristics of the given area, when designing the possibly most adequate elderly women based service.

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