

Identification of Perceived Stress and Stressors along with Coping Strategies Adopted by Elderly Persons in selected Old Age Homes of Kolkata, West Bengal

Anita Paul (Samanta)

Psychiatric Nursing Faculty, College of Nursing R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata-4

Abstract: *Elderly people are suffering from stress for various reasons which need to be taken care for betterment of healthy living. An investigation was conducted with the objectives to identify the stress and stressors perceived by elderly persons based on Lazarus and Folkman's Conceptual framework. Data was collected from 100 respondents aged 60-85 years were selected by stratified random sampling technique from five old age homes at Kolkata. A standardized Perceived Stress Scale to assess stress and a prepared and validated interview schedule for identifying stressors were used to collect data. The present study revealed that majority (60%) of the participants had experienced moderate level of stress, 65% of the elderly persons had perceived moderate stressors specifically health and activity was perceived more threatening. Religion, planning and self destruction were the more frequently used coping strategies. Statistically significant relationship were found between perceived stress and stressors [$t'_{df}(98)=6.45, p<0.001$], stress and coping strategies [$t'_{df}(98)=2.64, p<0.01$], stress and income [$t'_{df}(88)=2.30, p<0.05$], stressors and gender of the respondents [$\chi^2_{df}(1)=6.182, p<0.05$], stressors and income [$t'_{df}(88)=4.02, p<0.001$], coping strategies and age of the respondents [$t'_{df}(98)=3.11, p<0.01$] as well as coping strategies and marital status of the respondents [$\chi^2_{df}(2)=7.68, p<0.05$].*

Keywords: Stress, Stressors, coping strategies, Elderly persons and Old age home

1. Introduction

Ageing is an inescapable reality of human existence on the planet earth and plays a crucial role in global demographic transition. By 2050, the 'Greying' population is forecasted to reach 2 billion, about 80% of the elderly will be from developed countries^[1]. Stress is the universal human experience that bridges personalities, culture and time, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations from the time of birth till the last breath drawn^[2]. Psychological stress (Cohen, 1995) occurs when an individual perceives that his abilities to cope have exceeded the demands place on him, which is characterized by poor attention, inability to focus difficulties with friends and family, anxiety, poor sleep and minor illness^[2]. Nearly 6% of the urban and 7.2% of the rural older adults primarily suffer from neurotic stress related disorder. The major psychological problems reported by the elderly was anxiety followed by loneliness (58.5%), isolation (55.3%), stress (52.1%) feeling of guilt (51.1%) of affection and irritation^[3]. Stressors are the agent or demand or situation that evoked a pattern of stress response. Health deterioration, physical disabilities, reduced income, living arrangement and social relationship. Change in family structure, isolation from loved one, loss of control over normal routine, concern for future economic stability – all these act as stressors^[4]. The situations like health, housing, money, activity and living arrangement, Adjustment and maintenance of balance between the demand using problem focused and emotion focused coping with dysfunctional coping were considered in this study. Kolkata has nearly 24 old age homes, the highest number among all districts. These homes are governed by Welfare society, trusty board and private organizations^[5].

Objectives

The objective of the study were

- 1) To assess the level of stress perceived by elderly persons
- 2) To identify the stressors perceived by elderly persons
- 3) To find out adopted coping strategies by elderly persons
- 4) To determine the associations and correlations between stress and other variables.

2. Reviewed Literature

Related to stress: P. Juliet and Mrs. Appavu (September, 2011) conducted a comparative study to assess the level of stress among the senior citizens in old age homes and those in family in selected urban area in Konya Kumari District, Tamil Nadu. The study revealed that among 50 senior citizens in old age homes, 44 (88%) had moderate level of stress and 12% had mild level of stress, in family setting 84% had mild level of stress and 16% had moderate level of stress. The senior citizen of the old age home had higher mean stress score than their counter parts. The study also revealed that there was a significant association between demographic variables and level of stress^[6].

Related to stressors: Suvera S Pankaj (2012) conducted a study to investigate the impact of institutionalized and non institutionalized aged persons psychological well-being. The findings revealed that age (07.57%, 't' value =2.82, $p<0.01$), marital status (08.04%, 't'=2.87, $p<0.01$), social network (09.71%, 't' =2.49, $p<0.05$) and proportion of activity (22.20%, 't'=6.83, $p<0.01$) were responsible for the prediction of psychological well-being^[7].

Related to coping strategies : Mathew MA (2009) conducted a study to assess stress, coping strategies. The study revealed that non- institutionalized coped better than

the institutionalized elderly. Older adult those staying with family used emotion focused coping more than their counter part. Mean coping score. Percentage score was higher in the area of religious coping (96.5%), Instrumental support (81%) and acceptance (81.2%)^[8].

3. Materials and methods

The present study design was a descriptive survey design which was explorative in nature. Data were collected from 100 respondents aged 60-85 years selected by stratified random sampling technique from five Old Age Homes at Kolkata. A semi structured interview schedule composed of 11 items used to collect personal data. Stress was measured by Standardized perceived Stress Scale (10), developed by Dr.Sheldon Cohen et,al(1983), a structured interview schedule contained 20 items to measure stressors developed by investigator and a standardized tool- Brief-Cope developed by Carver (1997) was used to measure coping strategies. Content validity of the tool was ascertained by the opinion from ten experts in the respective field against set criteria.

4. Result

Section I: Findings related to sample characteristics

Equal (22%) numbers of the elderly persons were within the age group of either 60-64 years or 75-79 years. Greater than half (53%) of the respondents were females. Highest percentage (40%) of them was graduates. Majority (65%) of them were widowed (widow-38 and widower-27). Majority (73%) of them had an income within 3000-7000 per month.. More than half (55%)of the elderly persons were residing at old age home for less than 3 years. 52% of the elderly persons did not have own house.

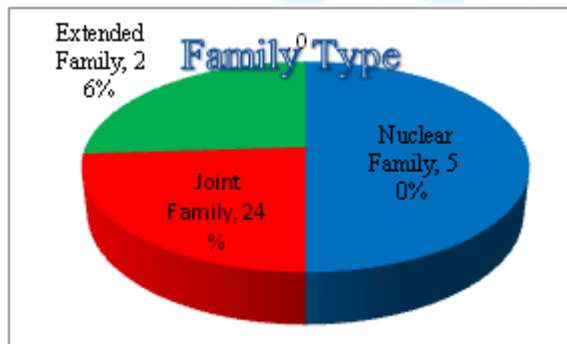


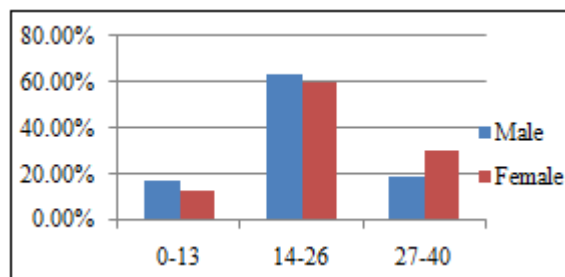
Figure 1: Pie diagram showing percentage distribution of study population on types of family (n=100)

Section II

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of the study population by their stress level (n=100)

Sl no. Variables	Fr(f)	%
Low stress (0-13)	15	15
Moderate stress (14-26)	60	60
High stress(27-40)	25	25

Table 1 showed that majority (60%) of the respondents had perceived moderate stress,25% had high level of stress whereas 20% had perceived high stressors and 65% had moderate stressors, in the present study.



Footnote: low stress-0-13,moderate stress-14-26,high stress-27-40

Figure 2: Bar diagram showing distribution of the study population by their gender and stress level(n=100)

Fig.2: showed that male elderly persons(63.82%) experienced more stress than female(56.60%) in terms of moderate stress score(14-26) whereas female(30.18%) seemed to face more stress than male(19.14%) in respect of high stress score(27-40).

Section III

Table 2: Correlation coefficients and their significance existing between stress score, stressors score, coping score and selected variables of the study population (n=100)

Sl. no. Variables	'r'values	't'values
1. Stress and age of the elderly persons	0.023	0.233
2. Stress and stressors	0.557	6.45***
3 Stressors and age of the elderly persons	0.09	0.915
4.Stress and coping	-0.261	2.64**
5.Stressors and coping	-0.127	1.25
6.Coping and age of the elderly persons	-0.303	3.11**

df(98)=0.195,p<0.05;0.254,p<0.01;0.321,p<0.001; 't' value= 1.98,p<0.05;2.58,p<0.01,3.29,p<0.001

This might be inferred from table 2 that more the perceived stressors in the transaction of the respondent higher the stress experienced by them. There was a statistically significant negative relationship between stress and coping score as well as between coping score and age of the elderly persons

Table 3: Association between gender of the elderly persons and stress scores and stressors scores(n=100)

Sl.no. Variables	Chi -square value(χ^2)
1. Gender and stress score of the elderly persons	0.361
2. Gender and stressors score	6.182*

df(1) $\chi^2=3.84$, P<0.05

5. Discussion

Present study findings supported previous investigations of different research observations. The findings are in agreement with the study of Shaji Helen. JC (December 2011, old age home at chennai)^[9] who highlighted that 78% of the study sample had moderate stress and 15% had high stress. P Juliet and Mrs. Appavu (September,2011) conducted a study to assess and compare the stress level of senior citizen of old age home and with the family in selected urban area of Kanya Kumari District, Tamil Nadu .The study findings support the present study result^[6]. Again

the study findings evaluate that health and activity(15.53 mean), social factor(mean 11), living arrangement(mean 7.96) followed by financial factors(mean-3.91) are the key sources for stress of the elderly persons which was in agreement with the reviewed study of Hunter RI and Gillen(2009)^[10].

Furthermore a Statistically significant relationship was found between stress perceived by elderly persons and stressors present. But no significant relationship was found between age of the elderly and stressors score and stress level. There was no significant association between gender.

6. Conclusion

Stress was evident among elderly persons residing in old age homes and was aggravated by widowhood. Perception of stress was positively associated with the perception of stressors present in the environment. Economical status had an influence on the development of stress of the elderly persons. Hence we are moving toward a world with graying population It is therefore important to provide more facilities for elderly living in old age homes either government or by non government authorities. The study findings restricted its generalization as this was conducted on a specific age group (60-85years) and confined to small sample. To test the applicability it is recommended to replicate the study on a large.

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Author Profile



Ms. Anita Paul (Samanta), B.Sc.(Hons) Nursing and M.Sc Nursing from Govt Colleges of Nursing, S.S.K.M.Hospital, Kolkata, W.B, India. At present she is Psychiatric Nursing Faculty of C.O.N, R.G.K.M.C&H, Kolkata, W.B, India . Her working experience is 22 years, within which 17 yrs in education. Attended various workshop seminar, conferences at national level, state level as a facilitator.