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Factors Influencing Ageing and Sleep Disorders in Women: A Study of Social and Environmental Factors

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Abstract

Ageing is a natural process which affects women in various ways. It brings deterioration to the body functions and appearance which brings unhappiness and lead to various sleep disorders. Therefore, in this paper an attempt has been made to investigate certain social factors like poverty, illiteracy, family, widowhood, loneliness, modern lifestyle, food habits and environmental factors like pollutions, micro nutrients and biological and chemical particles that lead to onset of process like lifestyle disease, diabetes, hypertension, pre-mature ageing, menopause disorders, sleep disorders, osteoporosis, estrogen and cancerous growth, etc. The specific objectives of the present paper are (i) To identify the social and environmental factors influencing ageing process with special reference to women and (ii) To identify sleep disturbances in ageing women. The entire study is based on both primary and secondary data which are collected through personnel questioners. The primary data are collected from 5 old age home in Hyderabad. The study included qualitative method and used gender as a category.

Key Words: Ageing, Women, Social Factors, Sleep Disorders, Environmental Factors

Introduction

Growing old is a biological process and it occurs naturally to all living organisms with the passage of time. It is a normal part of the life span but influenced by social factors, including culture and social organizations. It is a process that occurs at very different rates among various individuals and groups. Ageing is both biological and social construct. In other words; we can define ageing as a process characterized by progressive decline in all physiological functions. No one can escape ageing since the beginning of this universe but it occurs in different rates and varies from one individual to other. Age depends upon our genes, environmental influences, and lifestyle. It involves the steady decline of organ function and body system. Ageing can also be defined as a state of mind, which does not always keep pace with our chronological age. Ageing is a natural process, across the life period from conception through birth-Infancy-Childhood-Adolescence-Adulthood-Old Age to death. Each of these stages has unique characteristics and vulnerabilities requiring special attention to ensure best health during each stage.

Aim and Objectives

- To identify the social factors and environmental factors influencing ageing process with special reference to women.
- To identify sleep disturbances in ageing women

Methodology

For the present study, the resources and the information for the research work comes out through primary and secondary sources. The primary source of information was old age home in Hyderabad. These included interviews of various groups, data collections, tabulations, surveys, and observations, whereas the secondary sources were literature review using books, journals, articles, dissertations, website like science direct etc. The study included qualitative method and proposed to use gender as a category. The research is set out to examine the experiences and women perception from

ethnic socio-economic background. The old age homes where the field works and data collected are from Hyderabad. The samples which are taken from different age group are given below-

Age groups	Age in years
Group A-	20-30
Group B-	50-60
Group C-	60-70
Group D-	70-80
Group E-	80 and above

The old age homes where field work has been done are-

- Chandra Rajeswarao Old Age Home
- Old Age Home, C.R Foundation, Sherlingampally, Mandal, Kondapur, Hyderabad-500081
- Old Age Welfare Centre, Miyapur, Hyd.
- . Sri Sai Old Age Home, Miyapur, Hyd.
- Employees of University of Hyderabad campus.
- Masid Banda, a locality of Hyderabad.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using Jandee Scientific Sigma Stat software by one way ANOVA. The control and various age groups were compared by student t-test.

Background: It has been reported by Rao (1994), that aging and death could be a natural phenomenon and lies deep in our genetic plan. It also talks about ageing and death as a natural process of human being. To study ageing the author has mentioned three aspects of life: longevity, ageing and death in his book. The author also remarks the living organism which passes on specific characters from generation to generation and in each generation it ensures growth, development and reproduction followed by ageing and death. It has been reported by Morgan and kunkel (2001) the book, '*Ageing-the social context*' is a multidisciplinary especially taken from the sociological point of view. The book discuss about the influences of both psychology and physiology to interrelate with social forces to shape the meanings and experience of ageing. Rajan and Leibeg, (2003) have studied various aspects of ageing in India combined with analyses of current policies, policy trends and recommendations. Their work examines aging issues from a variety of perspectives-demographic foundations, social and family, relations, economic, health and disability, current interventions and advocacy and policy. Jagota, (2005) in her review described ageing as a progressive decline in all the physiological functions and also has discussed how age-related sleep disorders are affecting elderly people along with ageing.

Social and Environmental Factors Influencing Sleep Disorders in Ageing Women

In this section, an attempt has been made to identify some important factors which affect the sleep disorders of ageing women in general.

(a) Social Factor

The knowledge of ageing empowers us to provide for a better quality of life for the aged. Societal ageing refers to the demographic ageing of population and societies. The process of ageing and old age has been considered integral part of the process of development of the life course, set against the backdrop of births and rebirths. The social structures like

widowhood, health, socio economic and political status, poverty, illiteracy, living arrangements, income, family problems etc. affect ageing. (Liebig and Ranjan, 2005)

(i) Widowhood: Widowhood is one of the significant effects of prolonged life span of women. More than 65 percent of women live without a spouse as compared to 29 percent of men. Widowhood lowers the socio-economic status of the women. Most of the older women are either illiterate or barely literate, therefore this people have remunerative job and are likely dependent on spouse or children. In older years, widowhood brings loneliness and depression but also economic dependence. Unlike women, men are more affected by widowhood because men are generally more dependent on their spouse for social and economic support.

ii) Health: Health is very important to every individual. Health affects people's ability to take part in most social roles. It also affects people's satisfaction with life and how they are treated by others. Ageing is associated with fatigue and a decline in functional organs of the body due to physiological transformation. Both men and women are prone to the health problems usually associated with old age. The commonness of chronic illness, nutritional anemia, and chronic pelvic infection is often seen more in women. Exhaustion and depression are both likely consequences of child care and household work, especially in a low budget family. Domestic violence may be an immediate threat to women's health at home. They also face several reproductive hazards. Mostly, the older women in India suffer from immobility due to illness or disease. About 7 percent of women as compared to 4 percent of men were physically immobile. More serious studies were conducted in rural and urban areas show that older women have more problems with activities of daily living. They also get less help with their health problems than men do (Prakash, 2001).

iii) Socio economic and political status: In modern society, literacy, gainful employment and economic independence contribute to social status of a person. Age alone cannot be considered as a factor while considering prestige and status of a person. Since ancient times, older persons are considered essential for the survival of any tribe or any community because of their vast knowledge and wisdom reserved in them through their experiences over the passages of time. But with advancing technology and rapid modernization such skills of older persons are becoming out modelled. Women used to be engaged in domestic work which is not remunerative. A higher percentage of men are economically independent in old age compared to women. Living arrangements, Poverty and illiteracy are other factors which affects real people who live, hope and dream.

iv) Environmental factors of ageing Women: The environment has become an important variable in the behavioural science. Since different individuals have different unique genetic makeup and environment surroundings with which they interact every day, so the ageing process can occur at different rates in different people. There are two components of skin photo ageing; it's related to increased pigmentation, wrinkling, laxity and other visible changes in the skin. Ageing also decline in physiological function. The major environmental factors that affect ageing are like ultra violet radiation from the sun, exposure to sun, smoking, drinking too much of alcohol, eating disorderly, obesity, water pollutants, micro nutrients and chemical particles which lead to onset process like lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, lipid metabolic disorders, heart failure, skin problems and cancerous growth etc. It is also found that smoking and sun exposure have been shown to be associated with premature skin wrinkling or facial ageing. So all this factors lead to the premature ageing to the people (Rexbye et al, 2006). Beside that chemicals and other substances in the environment can cause serious impact on health problems in women such as lung disease, breast cancer, and reproductive system problems, menopause etc. Pregnant women will be affected more with the exposure to some toxic substances, including lead, mercury, cadmium, pesticides and household chemicals can risks of miscarriage, preterm birth and other pregnancy complication. Climate change and environmental policies are basically linked with gender, as women are often the first to be affected by our changing environment

v) Sleep disorders in women:

We can define 'sleep' as a natural process, where a body and mind take rest. Insomnia is difficulty of falling asleep or staying asleep or disturbances in sleep where people become unrest and insufficient. Sleep disorders is very much related with old people especially with women. Sleep disorders is a major symptoms and a problems of ageing, which cause decrease in bodily functions like mood, alertness, unconscious mind etc. Sleep disturbances is very common in older people especially among women. The change in sleeping patterns occurs due to both physical and lifestyle change that occurs as we aged. Changes in sleep patterns may be a normal part of ageing but several diverse factors contribute to sleep disturbances in a large proportion of the elderly. These contributing factors include changes associated with ageing, such as physical fitness, retirement, health problems, death of family members, changes in activity or social life, as well as changes in circadian rhythm. Sleep disorders have been implicated with an increased mortality rate (Smith, 2008). Women are two times more likely to suffer from sleep disorders, such as falling and staying asleep than men. There are four categories of sleep disorder; insomnia, hypersonic, sleeping disruptive disorders, and having trouble sticking to a normal sleep pattern. Younger women have sound sleep with fewer disturbances than compared to the aged women. As women age, physical and hormonal changes occur along with them. Sleep disturbances have become more common in women during menopause. Some women however are prone to sleep problems throughout their reproductive years. A number of factors affect women's change in hormonal levels, stress, illness, and lifestyle and sleep environment which impact sleep. Pregnancy and menstrual related hormonal fluctuations in women affect sleep patterns, mood and reaction to stress. Many women have premenstrual sleep disturbances, difficulty falling asleep, night time walking, difficulty in waking up, and daytime sleepiness all are linked with premenstrual changes. Insomnia (sleepiness) is one of the most common symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) (Jagota, 2005).

Results

In order to identify social and environmental factors influencing ageing and sleep disorders in women, we conducted a survey in old age home in Hyderabad, a few students and workers from University of Hyderabad and a locality called Masid Banda. For this study, structured questionnaires were developed and applied to 75 women's. For younger control group women students in the age groups of the University of Hyderabad were survey. The study was done by distributing questionnaires and also by interviewing them personally. The survey was divided in different section of age groups. This table shows variable old age group

Table No: 3:1 showing variable old age groups

Age group (in years)	Sample size (n)
20-30	20
50-60	10
60-70	16
70-80	20
80-90 and above	9
Total -	75

From above all this correspondent, the questionnaires like number of individuals having sleep problems, social problems, financial and health problems in women are been more focus in this survey. Because all this are age related problems in women. Mostly, the old age homes were both paid and unpaid. In Chandra Rajeswarao old age home, people were mostly educated and retired government employees; there were few old people who were dependent on their family. Mostly their sons lived in out of country. Almost everyone was a couple and it was not tuff for them to live as they were getting pension which was enough for their livelihood. In this home, mostly people were found from 60-90

years and above. In another 'Old Age Welfare Centre', Miyapur, which is also an old age home, mostly women were found in this home then the old men. This Old age home is free one and it is run by the donation that they received from various organizations. Women were found as widower and unmarried as they don't have anyone to look after. In this home helpers were not enough but the inmates themselves do the household work.

Table No. 3.2. Number of women having sleep problems

Age groups(in years)	No. of women having sleep problems	Total no.
20-30	0/20	0%
50-60	4/10	40%
60-70	6/16	37.5%
70-80	5/20	25%
80-90 and above	5/9	55.5%
Total-	20/65	26.66%

Table No. 3.2. Shows that, the age group of 60-70 years has a highest number of sleeping problems, whereas the other groups like 20-30, 50-60 years are found less. But when we see it as percentage wise the age group of 80-90 age people has more problems in their old age than the other age groups. The age groups of 20-30 do not have this kind of problems as they were strong and healthy enough than the other age people. Women aged 50-60 years suffered from different kind of diseases like joint pains, menopause, pregnancy etc and also the everyday household works, which turns them to depression and sleeping problems. The women mostly suffer from this entire problem, because physically women are always considered weak compared to men and they always take unnecessary burden on themselves. Psychologically women are very emotional and sensitive.

Table No. 3.3 Number of women having social problems

Age groups (in years)	No. of women having social problems	Percentage
20-30	0/20	0%
50-60	1/10	10%
60-70	8/16	30%
70-80	12/20	60%
80-90 and above	6/9	66.66%
Total-	27/75	36%

From the results indicated in Table No. 3.3, it is seen that social factors is also one of the major problem in human being. Most women responded that the social structures like poverty, income, education, loneliness, illiteracy, family problems and living arrangements are some of the social factors which affect their life. Especially among women widowhood is the worst stage where women become lonely and depress with her life. Unemployment also brings them nondependent and low status in the society. From the responded, the age group of 70-80 has a majority of social problems. But when we see through percentage 80-90 years age people have 66.66% which is more than any other groups. Because during this stage, mostly people are retired and those who are housewives has to depend on their family. They feel that they need love and support of their family during this age and also feel neglected by the younger generation of the society, which becomes problem for them to adjust.

Table No. 3.4 Number of women having financial problems?

Age groups (in years)	Number of women having financial problems	Percentage
20-30	0/20	20%
50-60	6/10	60%
60-70	12/16	75%
70-80	11/20	55%
80-9 and above	3/9	33.3%
Total-	32/75	42.66%

From the Table No. 3.4, it is found that the age groups of 50-60 years have their own income are almost employed. They are mostly engaged in some private or government institute where they support their family Therefore, this group does not have much financial problems because they were physically strong compared to 60-90 age groups and can be engaged with any kind of work. Some women were also found as housewives with no independent financial source where they depend on husband or sons. The women those who were above 60 years were almost retired persons with a pension. Some women managed their living arrangement by themselves. But there were few widows and housewives who have no income source and depend on their spouse. The respondents tended to express that those who have financial problem have difficult to maintain their nutrition, good medication, and their standard living becomes lower in a society and they cannot live independently. The age group of 80-90 is seen to be fewer problems because in this age as they are in a last stage of their life and has a low profile in the society. The consciousness of maintaining standard living, fashion, lifestyles etc in the society become fade in this old age. They become less interest in any kind of social activities.

Table. No. 3.5 Number of women's having health problems?

Age groups (in years)	Numbers of individuals having health problems	Percentage
20-30	0/20	0%
50-60	8/10	80%
60-70	10/16	62.5%
70-80	15/20	75%
80-90 and above	6/9	66.66%
Total-	39/75	52

From the Table.No.3.5 shows that almost every women has a small kind of health problems. But from the respondent it is found that the age groups of 70-80 years have the highest number of health problems compared to the age groups of 60-70, 20-30, 50-60 years. But when we see through percentage the age groups 80-90 years has the highest percent of 66.66% than the other age groups. From the result, it is indicated that the disease like menopause, menstruation, child bearing, joint pains, headache are commonly found in these women's which affect their health. They feel that women are more stressed physically and mentally. Because they are the one who have to take up all the responsibility of their household and children's. They feel women that have to work more physically in household e.g. cleaning, cooking, washing clothes taking care of children. If they do job they always have to maintain and balance themselves between work and family, which are not ignorable but a part of every women's life.

Discussion

The present study makes an attempt to examine the socio-economic, education income, health and a psychological study of the problems of ageing women. While it was hypothesized that social factors might not be the only reason but many other factors like environmental factors like smoking, exposure to sun and chemical particles etc affects ageing in

women. Women's suffer more compared to men. From the above result it is found that health and social factors go side by side as surprisingly the components are 66.66% both in 80-90 years age groups. Normally, the age groups of 20-30 years are the growing stage of a human being, so no such problems are found among them. These age groups are stronger, healthier and confident compared to other groups. They are always concerned about their health and appearance. The problem like health, social, and financial, when compared to each other, is related to sleep disorders in women. It is also found that sleep disorders is a major symptoms and a problems of ageing which is very common to women. It also brings all kind of irritations, stress, and decrease in bodily function to women. . Along with ageing, sleep disorders are also very common found in older women but it also affect women in all ages. It has a significant negative impact on daily functioning and quality of life. The respondents think that the lack of financial support makes to be unsociable and they cannot afford good medication, which later turn to a deadly disease. Social factors like widowhood, illiteracy, living standard etc. have influence a lot to the ageing women. Because, they feel that widowhood turns to depression and loneliness and they have to take more household responsibility compared to the married women. Lack of support and less confident makes they feel uncomfortable in the society. This makes them to grow old sooner than their actual age.

The findings of the above survey suggest that the old people are happier and comfortable living with their family than the old age home. In the old age everyone needs love and care of dear and near ones. Therefore, every family should make an effort and encourage their stay with their families by increasing some social awareness about the problems of the aged. The old person should be encouraged to stay in old age home only if he or she is helpless or no one to look after in this old age. It is also important to improve the quality of life of the old age people and maintain to live their elderly life physically, emotionally and socially.

From the above analysis of the data and increasing trend in the society, it was found that there should be more old age home, and the government should take an effective measures for the improvement of old age people. The problem of ageing among women must be made sensitized so that all women will be aware to take care of their own health, exercise, maintain proper diet, regular sleep time and living arrangement.

Conclusion

Thus, the discussion about the ageing in women is drawn from cross sections of society keeping variable social structures. From the above study, it is found that natural factors alone does not cause ageing but factors like environmental and social factors also becomes clear. Besides that, age is related to both men and women through environmental or any socio-cultural variables. We can say that the process of ageing is not sudden but it actually starts during the reproductive period, and continues at an increasing rate of time. It is also seen that ageing process is a multidisciplinary in nature. It is a complex interplay of physiological, psychological and social factors. It becomes responsibility of the government and biomedical for the improvement of health and nutrition for the betterment of old age life. It also requires an analytical understanding of the changing historical context in which ageing is regarded as a social phenomenon and not simply as physiological factors. Further and more importantly, people should improve their health and nutrition for the betterment of happy and healthy ageing life. Along with ageing, sleep disorders are also very common found in older women. It has a significant negative impact on daily functioning and quality of life. When more social and environmental problems occur, there will be more sleep disorders in women. Therefore, more effort should be made to bring zero down the social and environmental factors, so that they suffer from less sleep disorders and live a healthy ageing in their later life.

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