



## Effects of Aging on the Life Adjustment of Institutionalized Aged Monks

### KEYWORDS

Spiritual life, loneliness, social security

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### ABSTRACT

*The psychological problems of the elderly are aggravated by factors such as the lack of social security and inadequate facilities for health care, rehabilitation, and recreation. Also, in most of the developing countries, pension and social security is restricted to those who have worked in the public sector or the organized sector of industry. Many surveys have shown that retired elderly people are confronted with the problem of loneliness*

### MONKS AND THE PROBLEM OF AGING

Compared to the civil service, retirement age for monks is flexible. At the same time retirement may cause a number of problems. For some, the time released by retirement is an unwelcome burden. They may feel discouraged by the sudden uselessness that accompanies the lack of work. They may dwell on the injustice of the retirement regulations, anxiety about financial security, and regrets about the lack of personal control they are able to exert in these matters. Ideally for monks the aged years should be a time of stepping back from the world of work and focusing on spiritual life. It should be a time for prayer, reading or pursuing the activities they did not have time for when they were actively involved in the ministry.

- What things have gone well with me?
- What things have not gone well with me?
- What opportunities have I used?
- What opportunities have I squandered?
- What personal dream have I realized?
- What personal dreams have I not been able to realize?
- What have been my achievements and what have been my failures?
- What are my regrets
- How have I lived my life as a monk?

Here the past life is viewed fully. Most of the aged people ask these questions as examination of conscience and if the answer is not favorable then disappointed and depressed.

'Monks homes' where retired priests live can be a happy place for mutual sharing and support. As people advance in age, they tend to reminisce about their pasts. This process of nostalgic remembering allows them recapture some of the memorable events in their life history. Reminiscence may serve to increase the older monks' feelings of youth, competence and achievements. It is sad that some monks tend to dwell on sad events and allow earlier disappointments to preoccupy their current thoughts. Ideally the years of retirement should be a time of stepping back from the world of work and focusing on spiritual life. It should be a time for prayer, reading or pursuing the activities they did not have time for when they were actively involved in the ministry. For this purpose the monks are sending to the monks homes.

### Research methodology

#### Specific objectives

1. To study the personal profile of the institutionalized aged monks
2. To study the physical problems of the aged institutionalized monks.
3. To study the social problems faced by the institutionalized aged monks.

4. To study by the psychological problems faced by the aged monks.
5. To assess how effectively the prayer life helps the aged monks to cope up with the psychological challenges.

### Research Design

As the objective of this research study is to develop an understanding of the Effects of aging on the life adjustment of institutionalized aged monks, descriptive design is used.

### Tools of data collection

Interview schedule has been used in order to collect the data from the respondents. Questions were prepared on the basis of the main objectives of the study. The pretest facilitated a lot to make the necessary correction for accidental omission mistakes and commission mistakes of certain areas in the interview schedule. The interview schedule were divided into four major parts, identification data, the health problems, psychological problems, social problems and the role of friendship on the psychological adjustment of the aged monks.

### Universe and Unit of the study

Universe of the study consist of elderly monks admitted in aged homes who have retired from their religious activity. 8 major monk's temples (vihara) in Anuradhapura district is considered as a universe. Sample size is 60

### FINDINGS

- 60 respondents 26 of them belong to the age group of 86-95, 23 of them are between 75-85, 5 of them belong to 96-100, and 6 of them are below the age of 75.
- The educational qualification is very much varied among the respondents. 19 of them are studied up to 10th standard. 16 of them qualified pre degree, 20 of them are graduates, 5 of them have post graduation
- Among the 60 respondents 11 of them have been living in the institutions for less than 2 years, 16 of them are for four years, 10 of them for 7 years, 17 of them for 9 years, and 6 of them for 12.5 years. The correlation analysis proves that the number of years increases in the institution the social problems occurs decreases
- As number of years spend in the institution increases the psychological problems also decreases
- The number of friends and adjustmental to social problems increases as the years spend in the institution increases.
- Out of 60 respondents 38 suffer from major physical illness. The health of 22 monks is not affected seriously. With the increase in age, there is often a gradual decline in physical strength.
- As physical problem increases the dependency on the care givers also increases

- As age increases the physical problems also increases. It is proved by the cross tabulation of the variables age and physical problem
- The friendship circle decreases with the increase of physical illness.
- Ninety five per cent (95%) of the aged monks feel role changes after entering into late adulthood. Major role changes reported by the aged are: i) Shift from the role of a leader to an obedient in the institution
- Ninety per cent (90%) of the aged share their difficulties associated with role changes to their close friends.
- Out of 60 respondents effects of physical problem mainly affects of age group of 86 to 95. 26 respondents are in this category. 23 members from the age group of 75 to 85 are affected.
- Effects of physical problem and the level of education attained are not connected relevantly. Graduates are the people who suffer much from the physical problems. 20 graduates are suffering highly from various diseases.
- Depression, worry, stress, low self esteem, anxiety, physical dependence is the major effects of physical problems identified by the researcher.
- It has been proved that participation in leisure and recreational activities contributes to the better physical adjustment in old man
- More number of recreational activities led to the better physical adjustment in old age.
- A positive correlation between participation in leisure activities and decreased depression was found
- Outdoor recreation is better for the physical well being than the indoor recreation.
- The social problems and the age of the respondents are related much. As age increases the social problems also increases. It is proved by the chi square test between the variables of age and social problems.
- The education and social problems is also connected. As education increases the social problems decreases
- Physical problems and social problems of the elderly are connected. With the increase of physical problems the social problems increases.
- Aged people's friendship enables them to lead a better adjusted family life (86.7%).
- For sharing spiritual problems and advices, aged monks consider their close friends as the most dependable and helpful persons.
- Sixty eight per cent (68.3%) of the monks asks need the special concern and love from their friends when they feel loneliness
- For 68% of the elderly friendship is the only support group
- Ninety five per cent (95%) of the aged monks receive emotional and expressive support/advice/guidance from their friends to take a decision
- Among the 60 respondents 31 respondents suffer from psychological problems.
- 24 monks have moderate social problems
- Psychological problems and effects of physical problems are connected relevantly
- Psychological problems and social problems also well connected. When social problems increases psychological problems also increases
- Psychological Problems and age are well connected. With the increase in age the psychological problems decreases
- The psychological problem decreases as the prayer life increases

- Prayer life helps to cope up with the effects of physical problems
- Prayer life helps to cope up with the psychological problems also

#### SUGGESTIONS

- We should not blame ageing; like lightening a candle in darkness, we can help the aged to formulate and/ or maintain their life adjustmental strategies to lead a productive life in their late adulthood.
- Care professionals, policy makers and family members of the aged should recognize the tremendous power of friendship among the aged and to promote friendship groups among them. Through this, we can effectively tackle the problem- Poor adjustments in late adulthood.
- Our society should give much importance to informal network, especially friendship networks among the aged. They can soothe the difficulties of the aged through mutual exchange of guidance, support, advice, consolation and assistance. Through friendship groups, aged people can revive their relationship with society and can utilize their valuable experiences, knowledge and other resources for the development of mankind.
- Aged people should accept the fact that, close friendship in old age can act as an effective 'buffer' against the difficulties of ageing. They can provide expressive and emotional support, advice, guidance, assistance and consolation to you. So maintain your old friendships and formulate new ones!
- Gerontologists, Geriatric Social Workers and other professionals related to the field have to conduct researches, further studies on the effects of recreational activities and prayer life as the coping mechanisms in the life of the elderly should be conducted.
- Formation of clubs diocesan gatherings, family gatherings exclusively for the aged can help their psychological and social adjustments, social participation and life satisfaction.
- Needed measures should be taken to promote the recreational activities in the life of the priests
- The effectiveness of physical problems and social problems is increased by the incongruous and anachronous intervention of the care givers in the institution, so the care givers should be given orientation to take care after the elderly in the institution

#### CONCLUSION

Old age is frequently discussed not as a stage of life but as a problem of residential accommodation, social amenities and medical attention. For a large number of people it is a period of disappointment, dejection, disease, repentance and loneliness. In order to find some solace for their distressed mind good number of people turn towards religion. Old age thus has its own physical and psychological problems.

#### The Major findings of the researcher are:

- Recreational activities reduces the effects of physical problem
- The friendship has a major role to play in reducing the social problems of the institutionalized elderly
- The psychological problems are reduced by the prayer life

Actually these three dimensions, recreation, friendship and prayer are leading life adjustmental strategies of the institutionalized elderly monks. This coping mechanism can be used in the lives of lay old people also.

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