



Managing and Rehabilitating Aging Population of India – A Challenge and an Opportunity for Human Resource Managers

KEYWORDS

Aging Population, Employer Branding, HRM, Sustainable Development

Dr. Vivek M. Balse

Associate Professor, Pooja Bhagavat Memorial Mahajana Education Centre, Affltd to University of Mysore, K R S Road, Mysore,

Raihan Taqui Syed

B.E (India), M.E.M (Europe), M.B.A (Australia)
Director, Arcus Academy Pvt Ltd

Introduction

India is witnessing a growing population of elderly people. According to the law, a "senior citizen" means any person being a citizen of India, who has attained the age of sixty years or above. By 2050 there will be 324 million elderly citizens in India over the age of 60 while 48 million among them will be over the age of 80. Age per the Help age estimates the 80 plus population is growing fastest at the rate of 700 Percent according to report published by "Recent Statistics" on Old Age People in India - February 2015. The study further states that among the rural elderly persons almost 50% had a monthly per capita expenditure level between Rs. 420 to Rs. 775. Nearly 40% of persons aged 60 years and above were working. Prevalence of heart diseases among the aged was much higher in urban areas than in rural parts. About 64/1000 elderly in rural areas and 55/1000 in urban areas suffer from one or more disabilities. On one hand there is a income crunch and unaffordable treatment for the old disease will be an unforeseen burden on the society and government.

Need of the study

With the increase in the life expectancy, the size of elderly population is steadily growing in India. But the infrastructure and social help and medical facilities are not growing at the same pace. More and more families growing nuclear have only increased the complexity of the situation. This is a challenge as well as an opportunity for Human Resource Managers to rehabilitate this sizable chunk of population.

Statement of the problem

Unequitable treatment of elderly population of society which has suffered social inequalities, exploitation, discrimination and injustice down the years needs a humanitarian address in India.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the intensity of suffering by elderly population in India
- To study the gradual degradation in quality of life of elderly population
- To suggest steps /actions needed to be taken by HR managers/organisations

Last three decades there is a study increase in an elderly population in India. A report released by the United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge India suggests that India had 90 million elderly persons in 2011, with the number expected to grow to 173 million by 2026. Of the 90 million seniors, 30 million are living alone, and 90 per cent work for livelihood. The Social Defense Bureau of the Min-

istry mainly caters to the requirements of Senior Citizens, besides victims of alcoholism and substance abuse. The programmes and the policies of the Bureau aim at equipping this group to sustain a life of respect and honour and to become contributing citizens. In this process, the Bureau plays the role of a catalyst and has promoted voluntary action. The State governments, autonomous bodies, NGOs All the programmes are meant to aid, prevent neglect, abuse and exploitation and provide assistance to those deprived and mainstream them. The 1st October is observed every year as the International Day of Older Persons internationally. Being the nodal Ministry for the welfare of senior citizens, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has been celebrating the occasion every year

Available Statistics According to a report titled "Situation Analysis Of The Elderly in India" by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India, the elderly population account for 7.4% of total population in 2001.

For males it was marginally lower at 7.1%, while for females it was 7.8%. Among states the proportion vary from around 4% in small states like Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya to more than 10.5% in Kerala. About 65 per cent of the aged had to depend on others for their day-to-day maintenance. Less than 20% of elderly women but majority of elderly men were economically independent. Nearly 40% of persons aged 60 years and above (60% of men and 19% of women) were working. In rural areas 66% of elderly men and above 23% of aged women were still participating in economic activity, while in urban areas only 39% of elderly men and about 7% of elderly women were economically active. By 2050, India will be home to one out of every six of the world's older persons, and only China will have a larger number of elderly people, according to estimates released by the United Nations Population Fund. By 2050, nearly 80 per cent of the world's older persons will live in developing countries — with China and India contributing to over one-third that number. A report released by the United Nations Population Fund and HelpAge India to mark the International Day of Older Persons — observed on October 1 — suggests that India had 90 million elderly persons in 2011, with the number expected to grow to 173 million by 2026

Government Role The National Policy on Older Persons was announced by the Government of India in 1999. It was a step in pursuance of the UN General Assembly Resolution 47/5 to observe 1999 as the International Year of

Older Persons and in keeping with the assurances to older persons contained in the Constitution. The well-being of senior citizens is mandated in the Constitution of India under Article 41. 'The state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to public assistance in cases of old age'. The Right to Equality is guaranteed by the Constitution as a fundamental right. Social security is the concurrent responsibility of the central and state governments.

Facilities Given to Senior Citizens

- Income tax rebate upto an income of Rs. 3 lakh p.a.
- Higher rates of interest on saving schemes of senior citizens.
- Reservation of two seats for senior citizens in front row of the buses of the State Road Transport
- Some State Governments are giving fare concession to senior citizens in the State Road Transport
- Indian Railways provide 30% fare concession
- Wheel Chairs for use of older persons are available at Railway Junctions
- Airlines is offering 50% discount on basic fare for travel
- persons aged 60 years above from the BPL category are given grains at concessional rate

Other benefits include income tax relief, medical benefit, extra interest on savings, security of older persons through an integrated scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as well as financial support was provided for Old Age Homes, Day Care Centres. Medical Vans, Help Lines etc are extended. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment piloted landmark legislation the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 which is being promulgated by the States and Union Territories in stages

At the same time there is a growing feeling that there is not adequate facilities by Government for the elderly. For example, Vice chairman of helpage governing body retired IAS officer PC sen says " IN high bureaucratise they have given free reign to the state to do nothing and it does nothing" (Times of India feb 24 2015) . The most recent intervention has been the introduction of the National Programme for Health Care for Elderly in 2010, with the basic aim to provide separate and specialized comprehensive health care to senior citizens. The major components of this program are establishing geriatric departments in eight regional geriatric centers and strengthening health care facilities for the elderly at various levels in 100 districts.

Though the scheme is proposed to be expanded during the Twelfth Five Year Plan, the regional geriatric centers are yet to take off because of lack of space in the identified institutions.

The enactment of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, was a legislative milestone. However, its implementation has been poor.

Breaking up of joint family systems have contributed (in a way) negatively to the welfare of elderly population India. Career ambition of next generation n is one more reason. People in their late teens and early twenties, she argued, were far keener to have a 'good life with a standard amount of money' than 'slog' their guts out like their parents. New research has found that a similar attitude to work is burgeoning among the group of people known

as Generation Y - usually defined as those between the ages of 11 and 25. A study of more than 2,500 people born after the early Eighties found that they were rebelling against their parents' values and were determined not to lead lives that revolved so heavily around the world of work. "Salary and status were not high on the priority list, according to the study by Talentsmoothie, a firm that consults companies in banking, professional services and the law on the changing workforce.

An ongoing study undertaken by NGO .s has revealed that even those elderly people living with their families are very lonely and sad . 50 percent of elderly face abuse risen from 23 percent last year. This was mainly because of the changes in the family unit changes with the many social changes according to sunilthakur, senior manager in the NGO (T. O. I, June 14, 2014) As reported in Hindustan Times Jun 15, 2013 ,70 percent of elderly abuse cases are not reported. Delhi was part of the 2013 survey that was conducted in 24 cities across 20 states involving 6,548 respondents above 60 years of age.

And even the corporate world is involved in formulating and implementing the policies, acknowledging the social predicament. Procter and Gamble has already adapted its recruitment efforts and what it offers to meet the needs of Generation Y is highlighting the opportunity for flexible hours, the chance to work from home, the offer of up to a year of 'family leave' to look after children or elderly parents, . Similar packages are being offered by companies across advanced countries like U.K ..

Conclusion and Suggestions

With a careful observation of the woes that the elderly undergo in our country , managers dealing with human resources can push for following helpline.

Medical facility-

Reduced cost in the treatment in chronic diseases, Campaign for specific timings for OPD, Separate queue in corporate hospitals, Special discounts on medicine

Social facility-

Separate queue in banks, Recreation centers, stricter enforcement of seat in Buses and public transportation systems.

Homes for elderly- O

Id Age Homes, Day Care Centers

NGOs -

Tie up with NGO's Social awareness, Media usage to create a group for health conditions with the help of NGOs. Mobile Medicare Units to provide non-institutional services..

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