

SOCIAL RELATION AS A METHOD TO ENHANCE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL - BEING OF THE ELDERLY – A SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION STUDY



Social Science

KEYWORDS : Elderly Women, Social Work Intervention, Residential Care Home, Social Support

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ABSTRACT

The most ignored of all development issues is the population ageing. Ageing is primarily the effect of a two dimensional demographic change: on the one hand overall mortality declines, resulting in longer life expectancy; on the other, declines in fertility result in decreasing the proportion of children and young adults in the population and, consequently, in increasing that of older adults. The present study is an intervention type of research in a residential care home for the elderly women. The main focus of the study is to know whether the social work intervention is effective among the elderly women for improving their social relations, and thus the overall quality of life. Statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis and inferential statistics were applied to reach the findings and conclusions.

Introduction

It is important for the social scientist to put an emphasis on social, economic and psychological aspects of ageing besides biophysiological aspects because changes in the life of the aged depend on social and cultural practices. Gerontology is a multi-disciplinary science of ageing. Scientific research on ageing in the west has been well developed from the beginning of the 20th century. Apart from physical ailments, aged people have psychological discomforts also. They suffer from sensible tension because of ill health of self or their life partners and feel their loneliness very strongly. Thus, emotional insecurity of the aged is a serious problem. Family care is still considered to be the main source of social protection for the elderly. Because the aged expect not only economic support from the younger generation but more of social and emotional support also. Both the society as well as the family need to care and support elderly group for their improved psychological well – being and better quality of life.

Rationale of the study

Graying of population is one of the most significant characteristics of the twenty-first century. Even though both the gender has significant deterioration in their own life styles, elderly women are more vulnerable than males. The loss of the other half makes women more vulnerable and lead to a normal withdrawal from the society. Older women are more likely to be widowed than older men and are less likely to remarry than men who are widowed. As the status of women in many societies is linked to the status of their husbands, widows and unmarried older women can become particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. These factors result in increased vulnerability of some groups of elderly especially to those who are in residential care homes, without having their dear ones. Given this in background, the main objective of this study is to highlight intervention programme that will help the elderly women for a better living with increased quality of life.

Research Design

The research design used is quasi-experimental, as it is an intervention study. It is being used in the study because quasi-experimental research designs are experimental designs that do not provide for full control of extraneous variables primarily because of the lack of random assignment to groups. In the present study, there are three stages of assessment on social relations among elderly women as Pre assessment, Post assessment and Post-Post assessment. Convenience sampling is being adopted for the study and the main focus of the study is to know whether the intervention is effective among the targeted group in improving their social relations for better psychological well being.

Process of Data Collection

The first part of the interview schedule mainly reviewed the socio demographic profile of the respondents. The self developed

interview schedule was used to gather information like age, education, occupation, religion and economic background of the elderly. The second part is to assess the social relation system of the respondents through personal relationship, social support; partner relationship of the individual. The pre assessment was given before the intervention. The post assessment was administered soon after the intervention and the post-post assessment was taken after a gap of three months.

As part of the intervention package, all the respondents were kept in a group work model and the researcher facilitated the group for the achievement of desired goal. There are five sessions each in two segments by the experts focussing the three domains to improve the social relations through the intervention. The methodology for the intervention programme were short time interactions with subject expert, story time, group discussion, games,. The package is basically developed with social work philosophy and values for the intervention purpose. Social group work principles laid the foundation for all the interactive session with the presence and active involvement of professional social workers in each intervention session. Soon after the intervention programme, the second assessment was done in between the respondents by the researcher. The period of data collection for the post test assessment extended for 60 days. And it was again collected after three months of intervention as part of post - post intervention.

While describing the intervention package, all the session in the package was developed in consultation with the experts and materials derived from reliable sources like International Federation on Ageing (IFA), International Federation of Associations for Elderly People (FIAPA), Helpage India and so on. The whole of the package was divided into different sessions like Introduction to the intervention package, Elderly Psychological Changes, Maintenance Social Relationship for happy living, Group activities showcasing group strength and cohesion, etc.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table No: 1

Table showing the mean value of perception about social relation in different Period

Dimensions	Baseline Mean Value	Post Test I- Mean Value	Post Test II- Mean Value	P value
Personal relationship	26.04	57.29	55.24	<0.001
Social Support	30.88	55.83	53.83	<0.001
Sexual Activity	52.08	50.46	48.63	<0.001
Overall Qol	36.333 ^c	54.528 ^a	52.584 ^b	<0.001

Means having same letter as super script are homogeneous

Paired t - test was done for comparing baseline result scores with post - test score in the study. The t-value with respect to the personal relationship was found to be significant which indicates that there is significant difference between baseline result and post - test scores. In the case of personal relationship under the main domain of the social relations, mean score before the intervention was 26.04 which increased to 57.29. This shows the intervention is effective in raising the personal relationship in between the respondents. The facet addresses all the loving relationships of the respondents like close friends, family members, neighbours etc. The intervention helped the group to examine the extent to which they feel the companionship, love and support they desire from the intimate relationship in their life and the need to practise it.

The t-value with respect to the social support was found to be significant which indicates that there is significant difference between baseline result and post - test scores. In the case of social support, mean score before the intervention was 30.88 which increased to 55.83. This shows the intervention is effective in raising the social support system by and among the respondents. In baseline result, an assessment was done to examine how much a person feels the commitment, approval, and availability of practical assistance from family and friends. The Baseline result score is much less and through the intervention, they could develop positive consideration for their fellow friends in helping and supporting in their need.

Activity theory emphasizes the importance of ongoing social activity and outlines that a person's self-concept is related to the roles held by that person such as familial roles, recreational one, volunteer and community roles. That is why, in order to maintain a positive self-esteem, the person must substitute new roles for those that are lost because of age. Through the intervention programme, each respondent is more aware about the need to be more energetic and social to other for their better functioning of life.

The t-value with respect to the sexual activity was found to be insignificant which indicates that there is no significant difference between Baseline result and post - test scores. In the case of sexual activity, mean score before the intervention was 52.08 which decreased to 50.46. As all the respondents were living alone without a male partner, the chance of heterosexual is very low. The cases of homosexuality or any other deviant behaviour is not yet reported in the residential care home till date.

In the above table of social relations, comparison was done between post - test I and Post - test II scores using paired t-test. All the t-value was found to be significant at 0.01 levels. Mean scores shows that for the entire dimension, the scores found to be decreased in the post - test II score compared to Post - test I score. This shows that in the post - post - test, there is significant reduction of values from all the dimensions of social relation domain. And hence the study found out that the perception was very low in the pre intervention period with a mean value of 36.333, which was increased significantly to 54.528 in the first post - test and then reduced to 52.584 in post - post - test. Significant reduction was noted between post - test and post - post - test among the variables. However post - test II score was significantly higher than baseline result score, which shows that the intervention programme to increase the psychological well - being is effective with respect to the social relations.

Suggestions

Build up a person-centered system of care within residential settings through education and training of management and staff for enhancing group cohesion and well - feeling. Ensure immediate care of a social worker to residents in proportion with the number of residents and allow the direct participation of the professional social worker in the planning, delivery and supervision of care. Develop uniform national care standards for all types of residential care settings in India or State level norms in Kerala. Solicit residents and their dear ones directly about their experiences of residential care home as part of the regulatory and inspection process and add here necessary modifications.

The centre shall effectively make use of field practicum of the social work students with the support of competent supervisors in the centre for strengthening the residential care homes' activities. Research studies should identify feasible and appropriate community-based support programmes through bottom level intervention that would minimize social isolation of the elderly.

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