

“Crime Against Elder People”

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Abstract

Elderly categorization, young old, old-old, oldest-old, frail elderly, life expectancy increase, demographic projections, centenarians, United States, Super centenarians, aging population, global demographic trends, life expectancy increase, public health measures, infant mortality decline, elderly challenges, health issues, financial stability, socio- psychological well-being, India, age-related ailments, vision impairment, Elderly mental health, depression, psychiatric support, financial insecurity, retirement income, rising prices, familial expectations, housing challenges, urban living, socio-psychological struggles, social isolation, loneliness, aging experience.

Keywords- *centenarians, ailments, elderly, old, health and etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary discussions, there has been a nuanced categorization of the elderly population, moving beyond the broad age threshold of 60 years. Within this demographic, distinct groups have been identified by social scientists. Firstly, individuals aged between 60 and 70, who exhibit robust health and remain actively engaged, are referred to as the "young old." This cohort typically maintains a level of independence and vitality. Moving into the next phase, individuals aged 70 to 80 fall into the category known as the "old-old." This group often begins to require varying degrees of support services as they encounter age-related health challenges. Further along the age spectrum, those surpassing 80 years old are labelled as the "oldest-old." This group often faces increased frailty and may require more comprehensive care and assistance.¹

Additionally, there exists a subgroup termed the "frail elderly." Comprising individuals over 60 years old, this group experiences limitations in performing essential activities of daily living due to health issues or economic constraints, necessitating external assistance. This refined classification system enables a more nuanced understanding of the diverse needs and experiences within the elderly population, facilitating targeted support and interventions tailored to each group's specific requirements.

In developed nations, the 20th century witnessed an unprecedented increase in life expectancy, surpassing all previous records in recorded history. Comparing individuals born in the United States in 1995 to those born in 1900, the former can anticipate living over 35 years longer.

¹Aday, R. H. (2003). *Aging Prisoners: Crisis in American Corrections*. Praeger Publishers.

Presently, over 34 million Americans are aged 65 or older, constituting approximately 13 percent of the population. Projections indicate that by 2030, this demographic will more than double, with one in every five Americans surpassing the age of 65.

The phenomenon of centenarians, individuals living to 100 years or older, once rare, is now increasingly common, with approximately 60,000 centenarians in the United States. By 2060, this number may soar to 2.5 million. Furthermore, super centenarians, those aged 105 years and above, are poised to become as prevalent in the next century as centenarians. Internationally, certain regions already harbour significant elderly populations, with 16 to 18 percent of some populations aged 65 or older.²

By 2025, Japan is projected to have double the number of elderly individuals compared to children. Globally, the elderly population is expected to surpass one billion by 2025. The remarkable increase in life expectancy can be attributed to enhanced public health measures, advancements in living conditions, and breakthroughs in medical care. Additionally, a notable decline in infant mortality rates has played a pivotal role in elevating life expectancy figures.

2. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ELDERLY POPULATION IN INDIA

The elderly population in India faces a spectrum of challenges that encompass health, financial stability, socio-psychological well-being, and housing. These issues are intricately interconnected, often exacerbating one another.

2.1 Health

Maintaining the health of the elderly is paramount, not only due to the increasing number of elderly individuals but also because their physical resilience diminishes over time. Factors such as declining mobility, reduced resistance, and accelerated physical and mental deterioration necessitate focused attention. By 2020, it was estimated that three-quarters of deaths in developing countries could be attributed to age-related ailments. Moreover, age-related vision impairment, particularly due to conditions like cataracts, is prevalent, with around 8.1 million Indians affected. Mental health is also a concern, with over 10% of the elderly population experiencing depression, and a significant portion requiring psychiatric or psychological support.

2.2 Financial Insecurity

Economic insecurity among the elderly manifests in various forms. Many experience a reduction in income upon retirement or due to declining working capacity if self-employed. Additionally, income levels may not align with their needs or may be adversely affected by rising prices. Financial obligations, such as educating children or fulfilling marriage expenses, further strain

² Acierno, R., Hernandez, M. A., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2010). Prevalence and correlates of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse and potential neglect in the United States: The National Elder Mistreatment Study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 292-297.

their finances. This financial strain often leads to a sense of failure in meeting familial expectations and traditional responsibilities. Addressing these challenges necessitates comprehensive strategies that not only focus on individual aspects but also recognize their interconnected nature. By implementing targeted interventions that address health care accessibility, financial stability, and socio-psychological support, the well-being of the elderly population in India can be significantly enhanced.³

2.3 Housing Challenges

The housing situation for elderly individuals presents another significant concern, particularly in densely populated urban areas. In many modern families residing in metropolitan cities, multiple generations coexist in cramped living spaces, often confined to single-room apartments. Consequently, elderly parents may find themselves displaced from their living quarters at night to accommodate the privacy needs of younger couples. Such arrangements can strain familial relationships, fostering bitterness and resentment among elderly family members. Often, it is the elderly who must make compromises for the sake of family cohesion, enduring physical and emotional discomforts for their survival.

2.4 Socio-Psychological and Emotional Struggles

The transition from independence to dependence due to factors like loss of economic stability and physical vigour, along with the onset of degenerative diseases, profoundly affects the elderly. Social isolation and loneliness often result from a lack of shared interests and limited interaction with younger family members. Consequently, their leisure time becomes burdensome and devoid of meaningful activities, leading to boredom and depression. While the experience of ageing varies based on factors like familial dynamics and economic status, surveys consistently highlight common social and emotional challenges. These include feelings of loneliness, boredom, and depression stemming.⁴

3. ADDRESSING THE GROWING NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF AN AGING POPULATION IN INDIA

Over time, human life expectancy has increased, leading to a larger population of individuals aged sixty-five and above who require increased care and support in various aspects of life, including healthcare, food, clothing, and shelter. Several social challenges arise in addressing the needs of this demographic, including inadequate healthcare, insufficient infrastructure, changing family structures, lack of social support, and social inequalities.

³ Pillemer, K., & Finkelhor, D. (1989). *Causes of Elder Abuse: Caregiver Stress Versus Problem Relatives*. Lexington Books.

⁴ Dong, X., Simon, M. A., & Gorbien, M. (2007). Elder abuse and neglect in an urban Chinese population. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 19(3-4), 79-96.

3.1 Healthcare

The relationship between health and social challenges is significant, as deteriorating health affects social functioning. Elderly individuals often experience a decline in sociability, inability to perform domestic tasks, and reliance on medication for chronic conditions, leading to psychological, social, and functional disabilities. These health issues strain family relationships, particularly in nuclear families where the burden falls on a single earning member. However, the use of old age care homes faces shortages of essential medical personnel and supplies, coupled with a lack of geriatric care knowledge among physicians and insufficient training institutions.

3.2 Infrastructure

The lack of adequate infrastructure exacerbates the challenges faced by senior citizens, particularly concerning accessibility and comfort. Inadequate infrastructure at home and in public places hinders the management of chronic diseases and results in overcrowded and poorly equipped care facilities.

3.3 Changing Family Patterns

Traditional joint family systems, prevalent in Indian society, historically provided support and protection for the elderly. However, a shift towards nuclear families has left senior citizens more vulnerable to economic, physical, and emotional abuse, as caregiving responsibilities diminish within smaller family units.

3.4 Lack of Social Support

Governmental support for the social security of the elderly remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas where caretakers are scarce. Elderly individuals in these communities often experience loneliness, isolation, and feelings of being burdensome to their families, exacerbating their vulnerabilities.

3.5 Social Inequality

Disparities in elderly populations exist along rural-urban lines and across various cultural and social dimensions, including caste and gender. Rural elderly individuals may have stronger support networks due to the continued prevalence of joint family systems. While inequalities persist among elderly women, who despite higher education rates, often experience greater poverty than elderly men. India is on the cusp of a demographic shift, with the number of older persons projected to more than double from 71 million in 2001 to 173 million by 2026. This trend is driven by declining fertility rates and increased life expectancy. However, with this demographic shift comes a host of challenges, particularly concerning the security and welfare

of the elderly population.⁵

4. ADDRESSING THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION IN INDIA

4.1 Vulnerabilities of the Elderly Population

Elderly individuals often face a myriad of challenges, including senescence, functional disabilities, financial insecurity, and sickness. These vulnerabilities render them highly susceptible to crime and elder abuse, exacerbating their plight and compromising their safety and well-being. Despite the immense contributions they have made throughout their lives, many elderly individuals grapple with poverty, health issues, and lack of access to essential services such as health insurance.

4.2 Changing Living Arrangements and Social Dynamics

Traditionally, Indian families have upheld the moral responsibility of caring for elderly members. However, societal shifts, including globalization and changing values, have led to the decline of the joint family system and weakened familial support structures. As a result, a significant proportion of elderly individuals find themselves living alone, either due to lack of support from children or geographical separation from family members. This trend of increasing elderly individuals living alone makes them vulnerable to exploitation and victimization, particularly by criminals targeting soft targets.

4.3 Elder Abuse as a Social Menace

Elder abuse, encompassing mistreatment and maltreatment of aged persons, is pervasive in Indian society. Acts of elder abuse, whether within homes or in non-family settings, often go unnoticed and unreported, causing humiliation and anguish to elderly individuals. Perpetrators of elder abuse include family members, strangers, and formal caregivers, driven by perceptions of the elderly as redundant or burdensome.⁶

4.4 Safeguards and Legal Protections

Several legal provisions and safeguards exist to protect the rights and well-being of elderly individuals, including provisions under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, and the Domestic Violence Act. Additionally, initiatives such as the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) aim to address various aspects of elder welfare, including financial support, healthcare, and protection of life and property. In conclusion, as India grapples with the challenges posed by its aging population, it is imperative to prioritize the security and welfare of elderly individuals. This requires concerted efforts from policymakers, communities,

⁵ Payne, B. K. (2010). *Crime and Elder Abuse: An Integrated Perspective*. 3rd ed. Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

⁶ Teaster, P. B., & Roberto, K. A. (2004). The extent and consequences of elder abuse: Insights from the National Elder Abuse Incidence Study. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 16(1), 65-84.

and civil society organizations to address vulnerabilities, combat elder abuse, and ensure that the elderly can live with dignity and security in their later years. By fostering a culture of respect, support, and inclusion, India can uphold the rights and dignity of its aging population and build a more equitable and compassionate society for all.

5. ADDRESSING THE VULNERABILITIES OF ELDERLY CITIZENS: ENHANCING SECURITY MEASURES AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The safety and security of elderly citizens are paramount concerns in societies worldwide, and India is no exception. Despite efforts to implement special crime control measures aimed at protecting the elderly, challenges persist, particularly in cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai, where comprehensive action plans are yet to be fully developed. It is evident that ensuring the safety of elderly individuals requires multifaceted approaches and proactive strategies to address the unique vulnerabilities they face.

5.1 Special Crime Control Measures for Elderly Citizens

Establishment of Senior Citizens Security Cells: These specialized units within law enforcement agencies are dedicated to addressing the safety concerns of elderly individuals, offering targeted support and assistance.⁷

- **Senior Citizens Toll-Free Helplines:** Providing easy access to emergency assistance and support services for elderly citizens in distress.
- **Registration with Police:** Encouraging elderly citizens living alone to register with local police departments facilitates extra vigilance and targeted patrolling in their neighbourhoods.
- **Special Drives for Verification:** Conducting regular drives to verify the backgrounds of domestic helpers, tenants, and other individuals who may pose potential risks to elderly residents.
- **Sensitization Programs:** Educating communities and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) about safety measures and the importance of proactive vigilance in protecting elderly citizens.
- **Counselling Services:** Offering counselling and support services to elderly individuals to address their emotional needs and concerns.
- **Mobilization of Public and NGOs:** Engaging various stakeholders, including NGOs, youth clubs, and women's groups, to provide emotional support and assistance to elderly

⁷ Johnson, I. M. (2005). *Elder Abuse: An Ethical Dilemma*. Taylor & Francis.

citizens, particularly those facing loneliness and isolation.

- **Encouraging Senior Citizens Organizations:** Promoting the establishment of senior citizens' organizations to foster a sense of community and mutual support among elderly residents.