

Level of Depression among Elderly People and Coping Methods Adopted by them in a Selected Community of West Bengal

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Abstract

A descriptive study was conducted to identify the level of depression among the elderly people and the coping methods adopted by them in a selected community of West Bengal and to find the association between level of depression and selected variables as well as to find the co-relation between level of depression and coping methods. A descriptive co-relational research design was used and data were collected by survey approach; 80 samples were selected by purposive sampling technique and data were collected from them using structured questionnaire. The study revealed that majority of the samples (56.2%) had moderate depression and maximum of the samples (62.5%) had partially effective coping. There was significant association between level of depression and educational status, marital status and family income per month of the elderly people. The findings also depicted that there was low negative co-relation ($r=-0.34$) between level of depression and coping methods among the elderly people.

Depression in advanced age frequently coexists with other medical illnesses and disabilities. In addition, advancing age is often accompanied by loss of key social support systems due to the death of a spouse or siblings, retirement, and/or relocation of residence. Community-based mental health studies have revealed that the point prevalence of depressive disorders in the elderly people of the world varies between 10 percent and 20 percent depending on cultural situations. According to Mental Health Foundation statistics on mental health (2007), depression is more common in the elderly than in any other age group, affecting 20 percent of those living in the community and 40 percent of those who are living in care homes.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were :

1. To identify the level of depression among the elderly people.
2. To identify the coping methods adopted by the elderly people to overcome their depression.
3. To find the association between level depression and selected variables like age, gender, educational status, marital status, type of family, monthly family income, relationship with chil-

dren and maximum use of leisure time.

4. To find the correlation between depression and coping methods among the elderly people.

Review of literature

Chong & Cheng (2004) conducted a research to study the prevalence of depression in old age in Taiwan. A randomised sample of 1500 subjects aged 65 and over was selected from three communities. All assessments used the Geriatric Mental State Schedule. The diagnosis of depression was made with the GMS-AGECAT (Automated Geriatric Examination for Computerised Assisted Taxonomy). The researchers found that major depression was present in 5.9 percent of the samples and psychiatric disorders in 37.7 percent of samples.

Rajkumar, et al (2009) studied the nature, prevalence and factors associated with geriatric depression in a rural south Indian community. The researchers recruited 1000 participants aged over 65 years and assessed the prevalence of depression among them using structured assessment tools. The results showed that the prevalence of geriatric depression was 12.7 percent.

Amati (2010) stated that almost 20 percent of people over 65 show depressive symptoms while approximately 36 percent of over 75 year olds suffered from moderate to mild depression and about 40 percent of people over 85 years of age are affected by a

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depressive condition. People over 65 committed 19 percent of all suicides in USA and 93 percent of them had a depressive disorder.

Lyons (2010) highlighted that about 10 percent of the world's population is made up of older adults aged 60 years and above and depression affects about one in ten people aged over 65 years making it the most common of the mental health disorders of later life.

Basilio (2010) reported that the point prevalence of depressive disorders in the elderly people of world varies between 10 percent and 20 percent depending on different cultural situation. The study sought to determine the median prevalence rates of depressive disorders in the elderly population of India and other countries. The researcher found that the median prevalence rate of depressive disorders in the world for the elderly population was determined to be 10.3 percent as against 21.9 percent among the elderly Indian population. He concluded that there was a significant decreasing trend in world prevalence of elderly depression but it was significantly higher among elderly people in India than the rest of the world.

Methodology

A descriptive survey approach with co-relational design was used in this study, conducted in a selected community of West Bengal. Eighty elderly people (age 60 years and above), willing to participate in the study, were selected by purposive non-probability sampling technique.

Study tools: The research tools, used for the study consisted of the following:

Tool I: Questions related to the demographic data like age, sex, educational status, marital status, type of family, family income per month, relationship with children and use of leisure time.

Tool II: It had questions related to elderly depression. There were 30 questions and the responses were scored as 0 and 1 based on the scoring key. The possible range of scores was from 0 - 30. Based on the scores obtained a range was created to divide the level of depression into mild, moderate and severe depression.

Tool III : The tool with 40 questions related to coping methods adopted by the elderly people. The answers were scored based on the scoring key ranging from 0-120. Based on the scores obtained a range was created to divide the coping methods into effective, partially effective and ineffective coping methods.

Results

The study showed that:

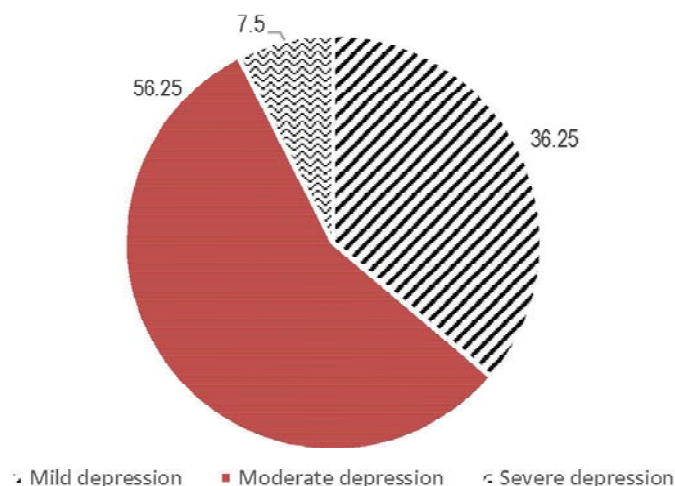
1. Maximum samples (56.25%) had moderate depression (Fig 1).
2. About 62.5 percent samples had partially effective coping whereas 13.75 percent samples had effective coping
3. The chi-square value of association between level of depression and educational status, marital status and monthly family income of the elderly people were 11.76, 10.9 and 8.28 respectively, which were significant at 0.05 level of significance.
4. The co-relation co-efficient score of level of depression and use of coping method was -0.34 which indicated that there is definite but low negative correlation between level of depression and use of coping methods among the elderly people.

Discussion

From the study findings it can be said that majority of the elderly people (56.25%) had moderate level of depression and 7.5 percent elderly people had severe depression. About 36.25 percent of elderly people had mild depression. The finding is supported by Deshpande et al (2010) who highlighted that among her study samples 41.1 percent were suggestive of likely depression and 18.9 percent had definite depression. The final study highlighted that about 60 percent of the population of the community had depression.

Further, there was no significant association between level of depression and few selected variables like age, gender, type of family, relationship with children and use of leisure time. Level of depression was significantly associated with educational status, marital status and family income of the elderly

Fig 1: Level of depression



people. Some studies have highlighted various factors associated with the depression level of elderly people. Carpinello (2007) conducted a psychosocial study of urban and rural population regarding depression among elderly people in which 317 elderly subjects were randomly selected from one urban and two rural communities. Data were collected by means of semi-structured clinical interview, the social adjustment scale and Beck Depression Inventory. An emerging trend was demonstrated towards a higher rate of prevalence of depression among females. Widowhood, poor educational status, financial difficulties and living alone were significantly associated with higher rate of depression among the elderly people.

Recommendations

- ❑ The study can be replicated on a larger sample for generalisation, with or without random sampling technique.
- ❑ The study can be carried out to assess the association between use of coping methods and selected variables.
- ❑ This study can be done in different hospital settings and in old age homes.
- ❑ A comparative study can be done to compare the depression level of elderly people in both rural and urban setting.

- ❑ A comparative study can be done to assess the level of depression among elderly people living in families and elderly people living at old age homes.

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