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Research article

A descriptive study to determine the prevalence of depression among the elderly residing in rural areas

Bharati Satish Weljale, Sharadchandra V. Dighe
College of Nursing, PIMS (DU), Loni (BK), Maharashtra, India

Abstract

Depression is a significant problem among old age people worldwide. It severely affects the health and cause suffering and burden for individual, family and society. Depression among the elderly is a concern; hence study was under taken to assess the depression among elderly population. Descriptive study design with cross sectional survey approach was used. 129 elderly people residing in Vithalnagar, Loni (Bk) village, were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected by using the Sheik JI and Yesavage JA, Geriatric Depression Scale [1986]. The data from the tool were analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. The level of depression was classified as no depression, moderate depression and severe depression. The result shows that a total 100 out of 129 elderly (77.5%) had moderate depression and 12.5% of participants had severe depression. The study reveals very high prevalence of depression among elderly population residing in Vithalnagar, Loni (Bk) village, Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra.

Keywords: Depression, elderly and Rural area.

*Corresponding author: Bharati Satish Weljale, Associate Professor, College of Nursing, PIMS (DU), Loni (BK), Maharashtra, India. Email: bhartiweljale@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Ageing is a progressive state, beginning with conception and ending with death, which is associated with physical, social and psychological changes. There has been a considerable increase in the absolute and relative numbers of older people in the world population of both developed and developing countries in the 20th century. Approximately 580 million elderly people (60 years and above) in the world, around 335 million live in developing countries [1]. The stark reality of the ageing scenario in India is that there are 77 million older persons in India today, and the number is growing to grow to 177 million in another 25 years. With life expectancy having increased from 40 years in 1951 to 64 years today, a person today has 20 years more to live than he would have 50 years back [2]. Many of the changes we face as we grow older such as retirement, the death of friends and loved ones, increased isolation, or medical problems can lead to depression. Depression is a disorder that is

characterized by sadness, changes in appetite, altered sleep patterns, feelings of dejection or hopelessness and sometimes suicidal tendencies. It can occur at any age; however it is the most common mental health disorder in the elderly [3]. It can impact your physical health, impair your memory and concentration, and prevent you from enjoying life. However, depression is not a normal or necessary part of aging however the depression is a common problem in elderly [4]. Depression is easily the most common and reversible "non cognitive" psychiatric disorder among the elderly in both the community and the nursing home setting. Late-life depression may cause multiple dysfunctions and also significantly increases the risk of premature death. Approximately 40% of elderly patients with depression become chronically depressed if they remain untreated, with about 30% to 40% showing a recurrence of symptoms [4]. The risk of getting depression is generally 10-25% for women and 5-12% in men. However, elderly with chronic illnesses face a much higher risk – between 25-33%. The Indian aged population is currently the second largest in the world.

Community-based mental health studies have revealed that the point prevalence of depressive disorders among the geriatric population in India varies between 13 and 25 % [5]. An official document about mental health in India observes that the elders living in rural areas represent a risk group because rural areas lack resources and with agriculture being the main occupation, there is neither income security nor any systematic provision for old age [6]. Though depression is the commonest mental health problem in old age, very few community-based studies have been conducted in rural India to understand the problem and its significance. Considering this background, a community-based study on depression among rural elderly population was undertaken.

Aim of the study

The study was aimed to determine the prevalence of depression among the elderly population of Vitthalnagar area of Loni village of Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra state.

2. Methodology

Research approach: Cross sectional survey approach was used.

Research design: Non experimental, descriptive study designs were adapted.

Study setting: Study was conducted at Vitthalnagar area of Loni (bk) village, Ahmednagar district.

Study population: Elderly who reside in Vitthalnagar area of Loni (bk) village were the population for the study.

Sampling technique: Non probability; Purposive sampling technique was utilized for selecting the samples.

Sampling criteria: Participants aged 60 years and above and permanent residents of Vitthalnagar area, willing to participate in the study were included in the study. Elderly participants having hearing impairment were excluded.

Sample size: The data was collected from 129 elderly participants.

Data collection instrument: The instrument used for data collection consists of two sections.

I) **Section (A)** deals with demographic data of participants such as age, education, religion and source of income.

II) **Section (B)** includes Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). GDS was developed by Sheik JI and Yesavage JA., which has been tested and used extensively to measure depression among the elderly. It is a brief questionnaire that consists of 30 questions.

Scores of more than 10 indicates presence of depression, and scores of 10 or less are considered to be negative for depression. Tool was translated in Marathi language for use.

Ethical consideration: Proposal was presented before Institutional Ethical Committee of Pravara Institute of Medical Sciences (DU), Loni and approval was obtained. (PIMS/CON/2014/73)

Data collection procedure: Before data collection objectives of the study were explained to the participants and their written consent was obtained. Data was collected by using interview technique. Each participant was interviewed for about 15-20 minutes.

Findings of the study

a) Findings related to demographic data

The highest percentages (50.38%) of elderly were in the age group of 60 – 65 years, 61% of them were illiterate, 91% of them were Hindus and only 12% of the elderly were receiving pension.

b) Findings related to prevalence of depression

The overall percentage of depression among elderly shows that 77.5% had moderate depression and 12.5% had severe depression. It was also observed that highest percentage (59%) of elderly dropped many of their activities and interest, 54% felt that they often get bored, 50% had felt their situation is hopeless and 47% of them felt they have more problem with memory and something bad is going to happen respectively. The lowest percentage (40%) felt that they were helpless and worthless. However 81% were happy most of the time and 77% had satisfied with their life.

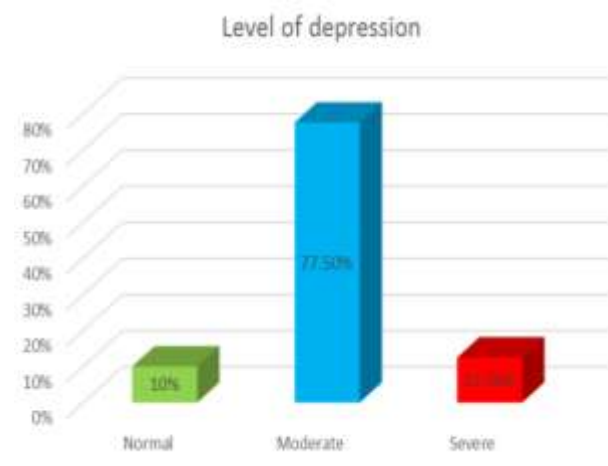


Figure1: Level of depression among elderly

3. Result and Discussion

Prevalence of moderate depression was found to be 77.5% and that of severe depression was 12.5%. These findings are supported by various studies conducted in India and abroad. In India prevalence of depression among elderly population ranges from 6%-50% [7]. A study conducted in Karnataka interrogated 627 elderly individuals of age group of 60 years and above at rural area of Udupi taluk over 8 month's period. The prevalence of depression in elderly population was determined to be 21.7%. The prevalence in the age group of 80 years and above and those individuals who had a history of death in the family within the last six months were found to be 34.4% and 52.4%, respectively [8]. A study conducted in the rural areas of West Bengal revealed depression among 52.2% elderly. [9]. A study conducted in 2006, reported prevalence of depression among elderly as 54% [10].

The prevalence among the elderly in our study is high as compared to other studies. This could be due to methodological differences. Also data collection instrument varies study to study. In this study used Geriatric Depression Scale, which is widely accepted and extensively tested. A factor which could lead to depression among elderly is financial dependency on others to meet their needs. In our study about 88% of the elderly were financially dependent on others. This could have reflected in the higher prevalence of depression. In fact high prevalence of depression among elderly is alarming and a cause of concern.

In this study only 12% elderly were receiving pension. That means 88% elderly were dependent on their family members to fulfill their financial needs. Elderly not receiving financial support in the form of pension was found to be associated with depression [11].

Recommendations

1. Study may be replicated on the larger sample.
2. Study may be undertaken to explore causes of depression among elderly.
3. Study may be conducted by utilizing different sampling techniques.

Nursing Implications: This study has following implications.

- **Nursing Education:** Nursing educators can educate students and health workers about preventive strategies and remedial measures for depression.
- **Nursing Service:** Nurse can implement different screening tools to identify depression among elderly patients in different wards.
- **Nursing Administration:** Nurse Administrators can arrange camps at community settings. The purpose of which is to screen elderly for depression and provide

health education to family members regarding care of elderly person.

Nursing Research: Nurse Researchers can undertake more extensive studies based on the findings and methodology of this study.

Conclusion

From the findings of the present study it can be concluded that the prevalence of depression is higher among the elderly residing in Vithalnagar, Loni (Bk) village. Elderly felt that they were helpless and worthless, and many dropped most of their activities and interest; which has very significant impact on quality of life and health status as well. From the study, we can see that there is a need to educate the family members regarding care of elderly and ways to prevent depression among elderly, initiation of old age home for elderly as well. Hence it is imperative for the nursing personnel working in hospitals and community/rehabilitative Homes to provide supportive, educative and rehabilitative services.

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