

Elderly: A Psychological and Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

Family is one of the most important social institutions in society. The behavior of a person, to a large extent, is determined by the family. A pleasant, joyful and moral family can contribute significantly to the development of society. Where do we learn moral values? From whom do we imbibe good qualities? Should there be someone to inject positive feelings? The avenues or sources of learning are infinite. However, family is considered as an indispensable institution in shaping the behavior of a person. During the 19th Century, individuals observed and acquired the good qualities from the members of the family, to be very specific, from the grandparents. In the contemporary scenario, we need to think whether we spend adequate time with our grandparents? Are we making use of their experiences and knowledge hub to develop, strengthen and travel in the right track? Do we need to encourage the establishment of old age homes? Let us explore the effect of changing the family system on the elderly people in this paper. This paper reflects the perception of the author/s.

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Introduction

The changing family system results in imbalance among the individuals, groups and the society. In the present world, people started to prefer the nuclear family, instead of a joint family. The factors that influence the choice of nuclear family may be the migration within the state, outside the state and the country for educational, employment and entrepreneurial causes.

Grandparents as the Treasure of the Family

Grandparents might have learnt/observed several things, either good or bad, throughout their life. They share the right and wrong things to the members of the family. They transform their learning experience to the future generations. They say more numbers of stories to their grandchildren for two reasons: (a) the primary reason is that they need to engage their grandchildren meaningfully; (b) the secondary reason is that they spend the precious time with their grandchildren to educate, sensitize and conscientize them on the values, ethics, principles that they need to follow and

practice to be a good child to their parents, to be the good student to the teachers, to be the role model for their relatives and neighbors and to be the good citizen of the country. The grandparents spend time with their grandchildren for noble concerns. They feel that they are also engaged meaningfully in their family. On the one hand their psychological well-being is found to be good, on the other, they take the responsibility of shaping the personality and molding the behavior of their grandchildren. Do we make use of the most important treasury with the right sense and for the right purposes? The elderly persons are not only the asset of their family members but also a beautiful gift to those people who are around them. They guide, facilitate, encourage, motivate, and console everyone to understand the ups and downs in life and to lead a balanced life that would help all the stakeholders concerned.

Engaging the Grandparents

Do we respect the elders in our home? Do we spend adequate time with them? Don't they expect to interact with the

members of the family? Aren't their expectations becoming more in the final phase of their life span? Do we understand their emotions and feelings? Whether we started to consider the elderly people as a burden?

Elderly people in the home love to talk more. They like to interact with the members of the family. They want special care and attention. They are longing to chat about their experiences with others. They feel more happy, if the members of the family give due importance and engage them through consultation, discussion and interaction. In the highly digitalized and busiest world, families are least bothered about spending time with the elderly people very often. Should all of us think seriously about this important issue? Should we be the role models for future generations in taking care of parents and grandparents?

How does the Changing Family System Affect the Elderly People?

India is known and very peculiar for its joint family system once upon a time. The sharing, cherishes, tolerance, adjustment, unity, learning from each other, enabling the members of the family to lead a healthy life were found to be the commendable practices of the joint family. The conflict between the members of the family were either resolved by themselves or by an arbitrator who is a common and honest person accepted by the parties of the conflict. Despite the differences and hardships, the joint family could succeed and earn positive results.

As far as the nuclear family is concerned, it has several disadvantages. It is because of the nuclear family system, the elderly people of the home are getting affected much. Followed by the elderly, children are also found to be the vulnerable section as their engagement in home is found to be unhealthy and risky to their life. The disengagement of children in the home leads to negative feelings and disruptions and thereby affects their physical and mental health. In the context of elderly, they lose the opportunity to live with their wards and grandchildren. Both the couples may experience the feeling of rejection, isolation, burden and it disturbs them mentally and physically. They expect that their loved ones have to take care of them for the services that they rendered for them. But then, sometimes, they also feel like their wards and grandchildren have to lead a happier life even though they do not take care of them.

Should we encourage the Emergence of Old Age Homes?

There are certain factors that induce the wards to admit their parents in paid old age homes. On the one hand, with no other options and hardships, some wards admit their parents in the old age home. Despite knowing the fact that the grandchildren and wards lose the most precious treasure, admitting the elderly in old age homes is gaining momentum. But, at times, people who live in the same location with the caliber and potentialities in taking care of their parents are also fascinated either leaving them in a separate home or not caring for them. At that time, the wound, the pain, the depression that the elderly people experience is something that cannot be expressed in terms of words. In fact the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 says that the day care centres may be established by the Government or other organizations to take care of the elderly. However, the establishment of more such old age homes must be seriously relooked into and there is a desperate need for conscientising the future pillars of the nation on taking care of their parents and grandparents. There may be a few advantages in

establishing old age homes and the disadvantages are as follows:

- i) Grandchildren do not understand the history and structure of the family;
- ii) Grandchildren are not able to listen to the stories of grandparents and thereby they cannot analyze what is good and bad;
- iii) The meaningful engagement of wards by their parents becomes questionable;
- iv) All the stakeholders concerned do not get the opportunity to listen to the experiential learning (which is something that is not available in the text books);
- v) Setting a bad example to the future generations by facilitating them to follow the path that is created and followed by their parents;
- vi) Gradually, the term love, care, affection, protection, unity, we feeling and sense of belongingness may not be in practice, despite its existence in black and white;
- vii) The lifestyle of the people will be converted from humanitarian to robotic or mechanic;
- viii) The mental health of the people will be very weak and people search for a person who can listen and pacify them (counselor); lose all the credentials and credibility that were maintained traditionally; and
- ix) There by results in more numbers of social evils/issues/problems.

Recommendations

Followings are some of the recommendations to the stakeholders concerned in de

- Consider the elderly people as treasure and assets of the family.
- Utilize their knowledge and experience to think positively, to act ethically, to behave morally and to live happily.
- Respect the elderly people in the family.
- Spend time to listen and to interact with elderly people
- Gain not only the material assets that they have for you but also the non-material gifts from them.
- Be responsible and accountable by adding value to their name and fame.
- Allow them to lead a healthy life by fulfilling their needs.
- Make them feel proud and happy.

Conclusion

Channelizing the youth in the right direction is an inevitable task in the contemporary scenario. Through the different forms and means, one of the important persons who could with patience and passion sensitize the new generations on the ethical and moral practices are elderly persons in the family. Hence, all should join hands in reducing the emergence of more old age homes. Try not to admit the elderly into old age homes to the maximum extent possible.