

Changing Family Roles for Senior Citizen Wellbeing: Implications for Support and Interventions

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ABSTRACT

The process of aging is an inevitable reality of human life, resulting in physical, psychological, and social changes that vary across environments, cultures, societies, and time. The period nearing the life expectancy of the human life cycle is known as old age, and individuals belonging to this stage are also referred to as senior citizens or the elderly. This article is based on the assumption that family support plays a crucial role in the well-being of senior citizens. The rationale behind this paper is to raise awareness about the challenges faced by senior citizens and to encourage individuals, families, and societies to address these issues through compassion, empathy, and social responsibility. It examines the evolving perspective of caring for senior citizens from various angles, including family support, migration, health, care, economy, roles, and responsibilities. Furthermore, it examines the challenges faced by senior citizens in today's society, where efficiency, strength, speed, and physical attractiveness are highly valued. The paper explores the concept and challenges of senior citizenship within different societal norms.

Keywords: Senior citizens, family Support, policy, elderly, wellbeing

Introduction

The concept of elderly is subjective (Segel-Karpas & Bergman, 2022) and varies across cultures, societies, and times. It is subjective in the sense that it depends on various factors and culture such as context, situation, age, growth and development, working conditions, retirement policies, and government welfare schemes. Declining fertility, increasing longevity, and the progression of large-sized cohorts to the older ages are causing elder shares to rise throughout the world. (Bloom & Luca, 2016) Moreover, there is an increase in the number of senior citizens doubled by 2050 due to advances in medical science. (WHO, 2015). This global trend towards an aging population is also evident in Nepal. Within this aging population, senior citizens face several challenges in today's Disrespect, lack of energy, not being able to use latest

gadgets, guided by traditional practice systems, generation gap, lack of proper support from new generation are the result of modernization, globalization and Europeanization and are the main causes for the challenges of aged population. A significant question arises: who will care for these elderly people? Elderly individuals are susceptibility group that requires adequate support and care, particularly from their families. Family support is an essential factor for the well-being of senior citizens, as it plays a crucial role in enhancing their quality of life. It was the primary responsibility of the offspring to care for senior citizens in the overall aspect of development. This was supported by the philosophy of Nepalese society which is built on the ancient Vedic tradition preached by the Hindu philosophy of life (Witzel, n.d.) where family value remains strong from the traditional institution of family care for the Senior Citizen (Chalise, 2023). However, globalizations have made it difficult for elderly individuals to receive proper care and support.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to offer a comprehensive examination of the difficulties encountered by elderly individuals in Nepal. These challenges encompass a range of issues such as, shifting family roles, responsibilities, and caregiving dynamics, impacts of migration, and health risks. By actively addressing and mitigating these multifaceted challenges, this article aims to make a meaningful contribution towards enhancing the quality of life and overall welfare of senior citizens, consequently promoting personal well-being.

The General objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various types of challenges faced senior citizenship citizens due to changing social structure structures. It includes the causes and factors that contribute to suffering. The specific objective of the study is to investigate the impact of changing family roles on the wellbeing of senior citizens. The study also aims to create awareness of the challenges faced by senior citizens, in order to encourage individuals, families, and societies to take actions that promote compassion, empathy, and social responsibility.

Literature Review

In today's culture, there is a prevalent emphasis on qualities such as efficiency, physical prowess, speed, and physical attractiveness (Hurlock 1981). Unfortunately, this cultural focus often leads to a disregard for the value and contributions of the elderly. The negative attitudes towards aging individuals result in self-doubt, strained relationships, and a diminished sense of purpose among senior citizens. (Hurlock, 1981). Consequently, younger generations perceive older adults as helpless, dependent, or lacking in significance.

The changing family structure from joint to nuclear, migration of families from

the rural areas to the urban areas or Nepal to abroad, and rapidly growth of urbanization have created huge challenges for the proper care of senior citizens. Transitions in social status, economic motives and family attitude, norms, values, and transformation from the joint family to the nuclear family structure have challenged properly rearing and caring for senior citizens (Yadav, 2012). Almost the entire senior citizens like to live in the family even with disgrace from family members but due to modern values and beliefs, traditional practices have been changing (Karki, 2011). Elder's views and words are taken as the rules and regulations to be followed by the community/family members (Uprety, 2006). The quality of elderly life during old age has been declining gradually as they started living alone (Subedi, 2020). Family members are the major person to care for the senior citizen (Chalise, 2023). Senior citizens have a fixed role in their families and community. For instance, the role of grandparents in the traditional society to take care of the grandchildren, to sing folk songs for children is being modified with preschool and school and modern devices and equipment. Hence the role, responsibility, status and function of senior citizens are changing along with changing society.

Young people care for the elderly through the shared living arrangement, but sharing living arrangements is a question with migration. The traditional agro-based community has been transforming to an industrial-based community where the independent group of people were busy with the living arrangement. Hence busy schedule of these groups forced the senior citizen to stay in their home and they migrate to various places. Migrants from economically middle and lower class families are continuing temporary migration to foreign countries. Temporary migration is making old age couples alone in rural villages (Gautam, 2005). There were various reasons for not staying with their out-migrated children like illness, children not having time to take care of their parents, children did not like to live with their parents, adjustment problems in the new place, and desire to die in their homeland (Khanal et al, 2018). Migration is the desire and need of the present generation. For self-growth and development, better education, quality of life, and employment young generation like to move to a new place where they fulfill their desire. At the same time along with the migration, the problem associated with the senior citizen is increasing. Senior citizen does not like to move away from their birth place memories. They are unable to manage their land and household activities. This trend of migration has changed the traditional practice system where the senior citizens have set their minds for old age.

parents who are left alone at home suffer various physical and mental problems (Doi et al, 2018). Various health hazards are associated with old age. Depression is more prevalent among elders with poor social support, low income, no spouse, no pensioner, and low educational status (Ghimire, 2012). Studies report shows that majority of the elderly people have facing socio-psychological challenges like loneliness, anxiety, depression, and insomnia, (Kshetri et al., 2012), helplessness, frustration, alzymers and

social burdening (Gautam, 2005). In fact the most of the senior citizens are grown up with the key learning that family members will care for them in their old age, they believe that it is a primary responsibility of the family member to care, to fulfill their need wants and desires but they did not get in their reality which results the mental problem on them.

Today's senior citizens are not prepared to live alone; they care for their parents till their last breath and they grow up with the same mentality that their children will care for them in their old age. In other words, these days they have the desire for care from their children, but due to various factors, their children's have to move away from their origin which hurts the desire of the senior citizen. Sooner or later, most old people must adjust to the death of their spouse; death of the spouse means hazards associated with living alone. This results the pain, suffering, hazards, depression loneliness to the senior citizen.

Methods and Study Area

This study employed a qualitative framework in two distinct phases, with the objective of addressing targeted research inquiries and accomplishing successful results. The study's primary focus was on the critical analysis of issues related to senior citizens, with a particular emphasis on the inequalities and power imbalances that exist within society. The paper examined the personal, family, and social lives of elderly individuals, highlighting the challenges they face in a society that values efficiency, strength, speed, and physical attractiveness.

The study's is grounded in the belief that the primary responsibility of caring for and supporting an elderly individual falls upon family members. In addition, the study employed historical realism to analyze the family role and responsibility for care of senior citizens. This analysis involved exploring the individuals who were involved in, as well as those who benefited from them. By doing so, the study provided valuable insights into the importance of using appropriate research methodology, critical analysis, and historical realism in research related to senior citizens.

Qualitative research methods are valuable for exploring the underlying motivations and meanings behind human behavior. In the first step, the context of senior citizens was studied, with a focus on understanding the problems faced by them. This was accomplished through focused group discussions, interviews, and participatory observation. These methods were useful in exploring the experiences of a wide range of older people and the views of informants who were experts in this area. The focus group discussions were held with older people themselves, who were invited to discuss factors that are creating the problem for their development. They were also asked to make suggestions for improving policies and service delivery and to identify interventions

that they considered effective. Participatory observation and 4 number of focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to investigate the personal and social factors that impact the quality of life of senior citizens. In the second step, a total number of 5 key informant interview was carried out with the chairperson of elderly care home, social activist, and the president of NGO which is working in the field of senior citizen. Secondary sources of data were used to gain insight into the current situation. For this related articles, journals, and books were considered to gain subjective information and analyze and explore the research questions in relation to the objective of the study. The study was conducted to gain a better understanding of the existing problems faced by senior citizens. The study investigates the causes of suffering among senior citizens at a personal level and the factors associated with the changing dynamics of family culture over time.

The study area for this research was Nagarjung municipality. This area was chosen because this municipality is heterogenous in nature i.e mixed culture, tradition, practice system could be found here because migrant people from different parts of Nepal are available here, it is suburban region and poses the characteristics of both urban and rural areas and has impact of both modern and traditional practice system.. So this municipality is the suitable place to study about the senior citizens who are from different geographical location, ethnic groups, class, caste and religion. The availability of information that helped answer the research questions. Additionally, the area has a diverse population in terms of caste, economy, ecology, and culture. Understanding this area provided a good source of knowledge to better understand the issue of senior citizens. Both urban and rural environments were studied to facilitate comparison of knowledge.

Results

Changing Family Structure

The study found that senior citizens have close relationships with their family members, and the lack of family support can lead to loneliness and depression. Among the highest expectations from their family, senior citizens value physical care, timely meals, and regular interactions. The shift from joint family structures to nuclear family structures has significantly impacted the quality of care provided to senior citizens. Elderly people said that earlier had fixed roles in their families and communities, such as taking care of grandchildren and singing folk songs for children. Now, these roles are now being replaced by preschools, schools, and modern devices. Furthermore, changing family structure, economic motives, and family attitudes have made it challenging to properly care for elderly.

Migration

Migration is a crucial factor that has adversely affected the elderly in Nepal. Previously, “When are we used to care for their elderly relatives through shared living arrangements, but due to increased migration cases, this is no longer feasible”. Temporary migration has made it challenging for elderly couples to stay in rural villages, where they are left alone to manage their land and household activities. Additionally, the younger generation's desire to move away from their place of origin for self-growth and development has made it difficult for the elderly to receive care and support. The research findings reveal that elderly individuals who are left alone at home experience a range of physical and mental health issues. These include depression, anxiety, loneliness, insomnia, frustration, and feelings of helplessness. Notably, depression is particularly common among the elderly who have limited social support, low income, lack of a spouse, absence of a pension, and low educational status. The loss of a spouse further exacerbates the situation, as it leads to reduced income and increased risks associated with living alone. Consequently, this combination of factors contributes to heightened pain, suffering, and depression among them.

Basic Needs

Senior citizens have fundamental needs like food, drink, shelter, healthcare, and personal care, which are crucial for their survival. The study identified that physical activity plays a significant role in maintaining the health and well-being of senior citizens. During the interview, the senior citizen emphasized the significance of a regular meal plan and a balanced diet in meeting their nutritional needs. They expressed that maintaining a structured eating routine and consuming a variety of nutrient-rich foods is of utmost importance for their overall well-being. The senior citizen emphasized that a regular meal plan ensures they receive consistent nourishment throughout the day, providing them with the necessary energy and essential nutrients.

Health

In terms of health factors, senior citizens face particular vulnerability to various diseases and health issues. Health care systems may differ between advanced and traditional societies, with traditional societies relying on home-based or traditional treatments like Dhami Jhakri. Nutritional deficiencies can worsen chronic and acute diseases and accelerate the onset of age-related degenerative conditions. To address these concerns, the government has implemented guidelines and established a fund to provide health care services to the elderly. This includes offering free medicine and treatment to economically disadvantaged senior citizens across all 75 districts of Nepal. Furthermore, funds have been allocated to establish health centers specifically for the elderly and provide free health services to individuals aged 75 years and above who suffer from heart and kidney conditions. Despite these efforts, a significant challenge remains in the form of senior citizens' lack of awareness about these available services.

Use of Economy Resources

Landholding is a critical economic factor that significantly impacts senior citizens. Typically, senior citizens, especially men, assume control over household resources, with land being their primary asset. However, as these individuals age, their ability to effectively manage their land diminishes. This leads to mismanagement and subsequent financial burdens for them. While the government offers assistance through programs like the Old-Age Allowance and pension systems, some seniors benefit from these initiatives. As a result, the majority of senior citizens heavily rely on support from their families and personal savings to sustain their lives.

Additionally, senior citizens often face financial challenges in meeting their daily expenses. These include providing financial support to their children on different occasions, participating in religious rituals, and covering the costs of medicine and healthcare. Unfortunately, their difficulty in managing their finances worsens these issues, leaving them in a vulnerable position.

Social Relationship

It was identified that senior citizens greatly benefit from having opportunities to actively engage socially with their family, friends, and the broader community. Creating avenues for social involvement is crucial for their overall well-being and sense of belonging. Activities such as attending functions organized at local level provide a platform for them to interact with peers, participate in group activities, and share experiences. Moreover, volunteering in community initiatives allows senior citizens to contribute their skills, knowledge, and wisdom, enabling them to feel valued and purposeful. Additionally, in today's digital age, connecting through social media platforms provides another avenue for them to stay connected with loved ones and engage with a wider network of individuals. By embracing these opportunities for social engagement, senior citizens can experience a renewed sense of fulfillment, a strengthened social support system, and an enhanced sense of community participation, fostering a more fulfilling and meaningful life.

Psychological Issue

Through the research conducted, it was identified that senior citizens commonly experience sleeping difficulties, including insomnia. These challenges with sleep can significantly impact their overall well-being and quality of life. Recognizing the importance of addressing this issue, it becomes crucial to develop strategies and interventions to improve sleep patterns among the elderly population. Additionally, social factors were highlighted as essential contributors to the quality of life of senior citizens. Being socially connected plays a vital role in promoting their mental and emotional well-being. Engaging in social interactions, maintaining meaningful relationships, and participating in community activities can enhance their sense of belonging and overall

life satisfaction. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that considers both addressing sleep difficulties and fostering social connections is crucial for enhancing the overall quality of life for senior citizens.

Mental Health

The research findings highlight that a significant number of senior citizens experience feelings of neglect and become burdensome on their families, leading to increased pressure, tension, and stress within the household. Disturbingly, in certain instances, maltreatment from their own families forces senior citizens to abandon their homes, resulting in dire situations where they either resort to begging or seek refuge in ashrams and orphanages. However, societal changes, including shifting family dynamics, migration patterns, and globalization, have necessitated a shift in responsibility for the well-being of the elderly from families to the government. Therefore, it is crucial to delve into the policies that senior citizens themselves desire in order to address their needs and improve their overall quality of life. By understanding and incorporating their perspectives, appropriate measures can be implemented to ensure the betterment and welfare of senior citizens in society.

Conclusion

The article suggests that the youth have a primary responsibility to look after their parents, while senior citizens can play a role as guardians in the family and society by maintaining discipline and passing on cultural values. Children need to be taught to be kind and loving to their grandparents, great-grandparents, or whoever. Love and affection are essential for any human being to achieve a higher level of satisfaction. The study found that lack of family support can lead to loneliness and depression in senior citizens, who have close relationships with their family members. Moreover, physical care, food on time, and regular interactions with family members are among the highest expectations of senior citizens from their family.

The challenges faced by senior citizens are numerous, and they are in urgent need of support and care. Changes in family structures, migration, and urbanization have made it difficult for elderly individuals to receive proper care and support. Moreover, health hazards associated with old age have made it challenging for the elderly to live alone. Therefore, it is essential to address these issues and provide adequate support and care to the elderly in Nepal. Senior citizens have basic and social needs that impact their quality of life. Providing them with opportunities for physical activity, social connections, personal care, and nutrition can improve their health and well-being. Additionally, it is crucial to treat them with dignity and respect, as they are an integral part of society.

Family support is an essential factor for the well-being of senior citizens from various perspectives, including family. Landholding and health factors are significant economic issues that affect senior citizens. While the government provides some assistance, more efforts are needed to support the elderly population and address their economic and health needs

Article highlights the psychological factors that affect senior citizens' well-being, including the need for a positive outlook, recognition, and self-worth. Senior citizens often feel a loss of self-worth due to illness, disability, or frailty, which can be devastating to their well-being and linked to depression and increased mortality. Therefore, caregivers from the family need to add to their loved one's quality of life by working together on projects that boost self-esteem. Enjoying hobbies or pursuing projects, such as writing memories, constructing a legacy album, or recording family stories, can elevate self-esteem.

Senior citizens' experience can guide strategic and stronger future administration, and the state should provide good standard care for those who have contributed to the welfare of the country. However, due to the changing family structure, senior citizens may feel insecure, and there is a need for a constitutional provision to ensure adequate care and nursing of parents. Some senior citizens view that people who have contributed for the welfare of the country and paid their share to society over their whole lives have a right to expect a good standard of state care when they reach old age. Meanwhile, the government should give an allowance for those who care for senior citizens, similar to the tax difference for single and married couples.

Terms of policy, senior citizens' experience can guide strategic and stronger future administration, and the state should provide good standard care for those who have contributed to the welfare of the country. However, due to the changing family structure, senior citizens may feel insecure, and there is a need for a constitutional provision to ensure adequate care and nursing of parents. Lastly, the article highlights the psychological factors that affect senior citizens' well-being, including the need for a positive outlook, recognition, and self-worth.

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