

Original Article

"Comparative Study on Loneliness of Elderly Population Living at Own Houses and Institutions in Dhaka City"

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Abstract

Background and objective: Elderly population are increasing with the increased life expectancy at birth. Perhaps no other age group feels the keen sting of loneliness more than the elderly. Institutional settings for the elderly population are developing in our country. This cross sectional study was done to compare the loneliness among elderly living in homes and institutional setting.

Materials and method: This was cross sectional analytical study. The study was conducted from 1st January to 31st December 2015 in 5 thanas of Dhaka South and in Old Rehabilitation Centre, Gazipur among three hundred seventy respondents who were above 60 years of age. Data were collected by interviewer administered questionnaires using a University of California Los Angeles Loneliness measuring scale. Descriptive statistics and t-test were computed.

Results: The study revealed that more than three quarter (86.5%) respondents were from their own settings. About half (55%) of the respondents living in their own place were female whereas majority of the respondents living in institutional settings were male (60%). The mean age of the respondents was 67.8 years with SD 5.6. In institutional settings more than half (60%) of the respondents were "often felt lonely" whereas 45.6% of respondents living in their own setting "sometimes felt lonely" and this difference was significant ($p < 0.05$). One-third of the respondents 33.8% were feeling loneliness due to death of the spouse.

Conclusion: The elderly people living in institutional settings felt more loneliness. It was observed that there was an increasing trend of feeling loneliness with age. So, steps should be taken to take away loneliness of the elderly people.

Key words: Elderly, Loneliness, Institution.

Introduction

Loneliness is an unpleasant emotional response to isolation or lack of companionship. Loneliness is common among the elderly population. Due to good health facilities life expectancy at birth increases along with number of elderly people increases. In Japan, one-fourth of the total population is elderly. In Bangladesh, the elderly population will be 8% in 2020 and projected to 17% by 2050 (Rahman, 2012). The children of the elderly people are always busy with their job. So, elderly people are feeling loneliness. The elderly people of urban area are lonelier than from village (Bryan, 2011; Fiorlilo et al, 2011). The question of feeling depression and loneliness will never arise if elderly population of Dhaka city have chance of talking and gossiping like the villagers. Modernization and

changes of family structure compel the elderly to live in institutions (Akbar et al, 2014). Scocco P et al (2006) find in cohort study that 26.5% elderly moved to a nursing home for their loneliness and 36.7% for lacking of caregiver. They also find that the psychological condition declined after 6 months of living in nursing homes.

The elderly can be used as wealth of our society. They are the moral fibre of the family and community rather than burden to the nation. Thus, the purpose of this research is to compare loneliness among the elderly population of community and institutions.

Materials and method:

This was a cross sectional type of analytical study. The study was conducted from 1st January to 31st December

2015 in 5 thanas of Dhaka South such as Gandaria, Sutrapur, Kotowali, Bangshal and Wari; and in Old Rehabilitation Centre, Gazipur. Three hundred seventy respondents who were above 60 years of age were the study population. Data were collected by interviewer administered questionnaires using a University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness measuring scale. The scale comprises 4 categories. The level of loneliness was scored "0" for "never feel lonely", "1" for "rarely feel lonely", "2" for "sometimes feel lonely" and "3" for "often feel lonely". Descriptive statistics and t-test were computed by the collected data.

Results:

Residents of the respondents

Majority of the respondents (86.5%) lived in their own setting. Mean age of the respondents is 67.8 years with SD 5.6 ranging from 60 to 90 years. (Table-1)

Table-1: Gender of respondents

Gender	Residents of their respondents	
	In own place (%)	Institutional settings (%)
Female	176 (47.6)	20 (5.4)
Male	144 (38.9)	30 (8.1)

Categories of loneliness

More than half of the respondents (60.0%) living in the institutional settings were "often felt lonely". More than one third of elderly population living their own residential place were "rarely felt lonely" (44.4%) or "sometimes felt lonely" (45.6%). None of elderly population living their own house was often felt loneliness. Student's t test was computed with the scores of scale ($p < 0.05$). So, there was a difference between the elderly populations living in their own residential place and living in institutional settings. (Table-2)

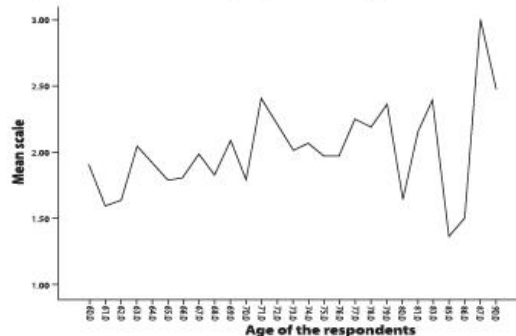
Table-2: Categories of loneliness of the respondents

Residents of the respondent	Categories of the loneliness				P value	t-test
	Never feel lonely	Rarely feel lonely	Sometimes feel lonely	Often feel lonely		
In own settings	32 (10.0%)	142 (44.4%)	146 (45.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0.000	24.133
Institutional settings	4 (8.0%)	10 (20.0%)	6 (12.0%)	30 (60.0%)		

Loneliness of the respondents in relation to their age

From the line graph, it was observed that there was an increasing trend of feeling loneliness with age. Loneliness is high at the age of 87 years. (Figure-1)

Figure-1: Loneliness by age of the respondents



Reasons of loneliness, opined by the respondents

More than one-thirds of the respondents (33.5 %) were feeling loneliness due to death of the spouse. Distant living of any family member was the second highest reason of loneliness for 18.6 % respondents. (Table-3)

Table-3: Reasons of loneliness

Reason of loneliness	N (%)
Death of the spouse	124 (33.5)
Distant live of family member	69 (18.6)
Death of other family member	44 (11.9)
Dependency on other	42 (11.4)
Death of a friend	21 (5.7)
Any other cause	5 (1.4)

Spending leisure time of the respondents

Higher proportion of the respondents living in their own settings (43%) and in the institutional settings (36%) spent leisure time by watching television. More than one third of respondents living in the institutional settings spent leisure time by reading books (36%). Thirty percent of the elderly population living in their own houses had the opportunity of passing leisure time by engaging themselves in various household works, family members and doing handicrafts. (Table-4)

Table-4: Spending leisure time

Leisure activity of the respondents	In own settings, n (%)	Institutional settings, n (%)
Watching television	139 (43.44)	18 (36.0)
Household working	58 (18.13)	0 (0.0)
Reading books	57 (17.81)	18 (36.0)
Doing religious activity	42 (13.13)	13 (26.0)
Listening music	29 (9.06)	2 (4.0)
Passing time with family members	29 (9.06)	0 (0.0)
Travelling	12 (3.75)	1 (2.0)
Handcrafting	9 (2.81)	0 (0.0)

Response rate more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Discussion

The study was done among elderly living in Dhaka South city and in an institutional setting in Gazipur. In this study, majority of the respondents (86.5%) lived in their own setting while rest of them (13.5%) were from institutional setting. Modernisation and changes of family structure compel the elderly to live in institutions (Akbar S et al, 2014).

In this study, higher level of loneliness (often felt lonely) was found among 60% of elderly of institutions. The elderly living in own settings did not categorise themselves as "often felt lonely". Drageset J et al (2015) stated that 40% of elderly in community and 56% of nursing homes were lonely.

The current study showed that loneliness was increased with age and reached at the age of 87 years. European Social Survey showed that loneliness increased among people aged 60 and over in most European countries (Nyqvist F et al, 2016).

The present study found that more than one-third of the respondents (43.5%) felt loneliness due to death of spouse. Scocco P et al (2006) found in a cohort study that 26.5% elderly moved to a nursing home for their loneliness and 36.7% for lacking of caregiver. The study showed deterioration of psychological condition after 6 months of living in nursing homes.

The elderly population of institutional setting had no chance of doing household works, passing their time with family members or making handicrafts.

Conclusion:

Some programmes such as Pension, Old Age Allowance Programme, National Elderly Policy and much more are running for the benefits of the elderly population. But, still there is a scope to do something. The elderly people living in institutional setting are lonelier. Steps should be taken to engage themselves in various activities, which can minimise their loneliness.

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