

Importance of ‘Life Skills’ in Elderly Woman’s life with Special Reference to Elderly Women Residing in Thrissur

Ms. Romio Mulakkal¹ and Dr. Licy A.D².

- 1. Research Scholar, M.G. University, Meghalaya.*
- 2. Head, Dept. Of Sociology, Carmel College, Mala.*

Email: romiojames@gmail.com
Email: adlicy@gmail.com

Abstract

In the present ultra-modern computerized era, society work hard to outnumber the elderly with the old-age homes as a false part of social security. Certainly there is tremendous changes occurred in our society as an after effect of industrialization, individualization, modernization etc. These evolutionary changes molded social being into an individually oriented secluded person. The glorious position of elderly false steeply and we all have to pass through this phase. We have to explore their existing life skills which make them capable to live happily and prestigiously in their later age as this is an age of harvesting. In this context descriptive method was undertaken to explore their life skills. Analysis was based on primary data collected through structured interview schedule. Samples were selected with random sampling method from Thrissur district.

Introduction

According to WHO life skills are “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. “Life skills” refers to the skills usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life. They help us to accomplish our ambitions and live to our full potential. There is no definitive list of skills necessary for human being. Life skills are behaviours used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are set of human skills acquired through learning or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life. These vary greatly depending on social norms and community expectations. We all want to accomplish anything in life. For that we should realize our full potential. Mastering certain skills is very important for this. Life skills are learned ones and mindfully incorporated in our behaviour.

All over the world the population of aged is increasing. Subtle examination of demographic structure stresses two points-ageing population and feminization in elderly. Old age is visualized as diminished physical and psychic activity and a plethora of problems. India is not exempted from this. Among Indian states, Kerala has the largest proportion of elderly population and the growth rate among the aged is increasing. Life skills has significant role to execute the daily activities in everyone’s life especially for elderly. Inter personal communication has been described as a critical tool for life adjustment, linking people to their environment. People use communication to perform many functions in their day-to-day activities, including employment, social and leisure activities, community involvement,

personal relationships, and meeting needs for daily living. Many of these functions change with typical aging. People retire from careers. Their social circles and personal relationships may change as they adjust their life roles and change their activity patterns. Social skills help elderly to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally.

Review of Literature

Compton (2009) in his book 'The indispensable book of practical life skills' states that all those skills that you never quite managed to learn but that older generations seem to know intuitively will suddenly be at your fingertips-whether it be skinning an animal, making compost or mending a hem. This guide is utterly indispensable. Terry Herley, in his article 'Cognitive activities for the elderly' described that there are a number of elderly people that never show any signs of an age-related decline in cognitive functions'. According to Herley, cognitive skills are the mental capabilities that a person has which allow them to process all the information they receive from their senses. According to Yorkston, Bourgeois and Baylor (2011), interpersonal communication has been described as a critical tool for life adjustment, linking people to their environment. In 'Becoming Human the Origins and Development of Women's Human Rights', Fraser (2003) states that the original contributors to women's human rights were those who first taught women to read and thus to explore the world outside the home and immediate community. The prerequisites for development and implementation of women's human rights are education.

Chakrabarti (2006), in 'Aged Artisans in Tribal Society a Note on Creative Talents of the Aged Tribal', states that among artisans in tribal society the old persons are not treated as liabilities but assets for their family and society. Attaining old hood is valuable for them as the aged are regarded as the storehouse of the experience and knowledge. The tradition of crafting the objects or depicting sketches, painting follows a definite indigenous technique that is transmitted by the aged skilled experienced craftsman to younger generation through oral tradition. So the tribal aged experienced artisans are more respected by the fellowmen as they transmit the cultural heritage of the community.

Early theories of ageing, appeared in the 1960s. Modernization theory argued that the Industrial Revolution and the development of nations had negative consequences for the old (Burgess 1960). Influenced by functional and development perspectives, disengagement theory (Cumming and Henry, 1961) argued that both the ageing individual and society benefit from the withdrawal of older persons from aspects of social life, particularly from the labour force. According to disengagement theory, decreased interaction between aging individuals and society was assumed to be a universal process that relieves older individuals of the pressures of adhering to societal norms and eases the transition to death. However, an ongoing criticism of the social scientific study of ageing is that it lacks "theoretical rigor" and tend towards the descriptive. Thus research on ageing being primarily problem-driven rather than theory-driven. Kerala's elderly female folk are heterogeneous group. Their socio-economic status deeply intertwined with religious cultural patriarchal factors. Other than this there are some other factors which should not appear to our eye sight may also come into play. We have to find out these factors which play among the elderly.

Methodology

In Kerala as per 2001 census, the percentage of 60+ was 10.48, and it is 11.7 per cent in 2011 and is projected to be 15.6 per cent in 2021. The elderly women represent the fastest

growing age group in the population of Kerala. The threat of population ageing is more severe in Kerala than the rest of the country. Gender dimension of ageing is very significant in Kerala and female population predominates at all the stages of older ages. A large number of elderly females are in the status of widowhood, illiterates, non-working and belong to lower and or no income brackets. All these finding leads to the conclusion that the aged females are the most deprived among the deprived. Their miserable status makes them to appear more aged than actually what they are. 'World Health Organization Report' states that the percentage of the aged women who are 60+ is going to be doubled within two decades. But so far no specific study has been done to elevate their status. There will be lesser and lesser people taking care of the elderly as the decades roll by. Traditional life guards of family care are dwindling due to industrialization, our migration, dual career, female job participation and growing consumerism. All these make the well-being of the elderly, a growing challenge of the 21st century. A significant aspect of challenge comprises the unawareness of life skills.

An overview of available studies revealed the fact that the majority of researches concentrated on the health problems faced by the elderly women. A study based on the **Importance of 'Life Skills' in Elderly Woman's life** has not been done. So the present study "**Importance of 'Life Skills' in Elderly Woman's life With Special Reference to Elderly Women Residing in Thrissur**" is undertaken with a view to explore information to fill the existing research gap. It is hoped that such a study would be helpful to the policy makers and planners. In turn it is benefited by our society.

Scope of the study is limited to the elderly women (60 years and above) residing in Thrissur. The study on life skill of elderly woman was being primarily problem-driven. Kerala elderly womankind is a heterogeneous group. They have to face a lot of problems during their existence. So this analysis is based on these problems. A single theory cannot explain all these problems. Various factors deeply intertwined to each of it. Descriptive research design has been adopted for this study. The purpose of this research design is to explore the life skills of elderly women and elicit new information about the elderly women residing in family atmosphere and in old age homes in Thrissur. The design uses primary and secondary data. The primary data about the elderly for the study have been collected through survey conducted among elderly women in Thrissur district with a structured schedule. Two questionnaires are used for it. One is for members residing in home and the other for members belonging in old age home. The secondary data are derived from books, journals, reports, newspapers and online media on the subject. These are already recorded for some other purposes but used with particular study project. 100 subjects from Thrissur district is selected on simple random method. In the 100 element, 50 residing in home and the remaining 50 from old age home. Data collected through structured interview schedule were analyzed with SPSS.

Objectives

1. To explore the life skills of the elderly women

Results

Table.1. Age structure of elderly women residing in home.

Age	Own home	Old-age home	Total
60-69	⁶⁶ 33 ⁶⁵	³⁶ 18 ³⁵	⁵¹ 51 ¹⁰⁰
70-79	²⁸ 14 ³⁹	⁴⁴ 22 ⁶¹	³⁶ 36 ¹⁰⁰
>80	⁶ 3 ²³	²⁰ 10 ⁷⁷	¹³ 13 ¹⁰⁰
Total	¹⁰⁰ 50 ¹⁰⁰	¹⁰⁰ 50 ¹⁰⁰	¹⁰⁰ 100 ¹⁰⁰

In the above table out of 50 women residing in own home, 66 percentage (33) belongs to young-old elderly. 28 percentage (14) belongs to 70-79yrs age group. 6 percentage (3) in oldest-old section. Out of 50 elderly residing in old-age home 36 percentage (18) belong to young-old and middle-age group 44 percentage (22) and 20 percentage (10) in the last section. From the present study, researcher found out that as they are getting old, the chance for admission to old age home increases. As they getting aged the dependence—both physical and economical, may increase. Thus age has crucial role in assigning their socio-economic status in their own house. This factor is so powerful as to exclude from their home.

Table. 2. Age and marital Status

Age	Marital Status								
	Own home					Old-age home			
	Married	Widow	Unmarried	Separated	Total	Married	Widow	Unmarried	Total
60-69	⁸⁷ 20 ⁶¹	⁴⁸ 11 ³³	³³ 1 ³	¹⁰⁰ 1 ³	⁶⁶ 33 ¹⁰⁰		²⁹ 8 ⁴⁴	⁴⁸ 10 ⁵⁶	³⁶ 18 ¹⁰⁰
70-79	⁹ 2 ¹⁴	⁴³ 10 ⁷²	⁶⁷ 2 ¹⁴		²⁸ 14 ¹⁰⁰	¹⁰⁰ 1 ⁵	⁴⁶ 13 ⁵⁹	³⁸ 8 ³⁶	⁴⁴ 22 ¹⁰⁰

> 80	4 1 ³³	9 2 ⁶⁷			6 3 ¹⁰⁰		25 7 ⁷⁰	14 3 ³⁰	20 10 ¹⁰⁰
Total	100 23 ⁴⁶	100 23 ⁴⁶	100 3 ⁶	100 1 ²	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 1 ²	100 28 ⁵⁶	100 21 ⁴²	100 50 ¹⁰⁰

The above table no.2 deals with the marital status of elderly along with their age. As the age increases married members percentage decreased steeply. Chronic illness increases with age. Older women have more problems with activities of daily living. Widowhood is one of the after effects of prolonged life. Widowhood lowers the socio-economic status of the women. This brings not only loneliness and depression but also economic dependence. Living arrangements influences the amount and type of care a person receives, social support, help they need during emergency and long term care. Very meager percentage of married females present in old-age home.

Table.3. Education and occupation of elderly residing in home and old-age home

	Occupation								
	Home					Old-age home			
Education	Household	Unskilled	Manual Labour	Govt.Employee	Total	Household	Unskilled	Manual Labour	Total
Illiterate	14 4 ⁶⁷	18 33 2			12 100 6	14 4 ²⁷	20 6 1	63 67 10	30 15 ¹⁰⁰
Primary level	76 22 ⁶⁹	73 25 8	100 3 1	11 3 1	64 100 32	79 23 ⁷⁰	80 12 4	37 18 6	66 33 ¹⁰⁰
Secondary Level	10 3 ³⁷	9 13 1		45 4 ⁵⁰	16 100 8	7 2 ¹⁰⁰			4 2 ¹⁰⁰
Degree				22 2 ¹⁰⁰	4 100 2				

Above degree				22 2 ¹⁰⁰	4 2 ¹⁰⁰				
Total	100 29 ⁵⁸	100 11 ²²	100 1 ²	100 9 ¹⁸	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 29 ⁵⁸	100 5 ¹⁰	100 16 ³²	100 50 ¹⁰⁰

Relationship of education and occupation of elderly residing in home and old-age home analyzed in the table no.3. Among the illiterates residing in home, 67 percentage (4) engaged with household activities and remaining 33 percentage (2) engaged with unskilled jobs. Among the illiterates residing in old-age home, 27 percentage (4) belong to household, 6 percentage (1) to unskilled and remaining 67 percentage (10) to manual labour. Among elderly, major share contributed by primary levels. From the present study it is found out that elderly do not possess high educational skill. This is further decreased in old-age home. We have to achieve more to enhance their happy living.

Table.4. Occupation and income of elderly residing in home and old-age home

	Home						Old-age home			
Occupation	Nil	<500	500-1000	1000-2000	>2000	Total	Nil	<500	>2000	Total
Household	78 21 ⁷³	86 6 ²¹	25 1 ³		9 1 ³	58 29 ¹⁰⁰	59 27 ⁹³		100 2 ⁷	58 29 ¹⁰⁰
Unskilled	22 6 ⁵⁵	14 1 ⁹	75 3 ²⁷	100 1 ⁹		22 11 ¹⁰⁰	8 4 ⁸⁰	50 1 ²⁰		10 5 ¹⁰⁰
Manual Labour					9 1 ¹⁰⁰	2 1 ¹⁰⁰	33 15 ⁹⁴	50 1 ⁶		32 16 ¹⁰⁰
Govt. Service					82 9 ¹⁰⁰	18 9 ¹⁰⁰				
Total	100 27 ⁵⁴	100 7 ¹⁴	100 4 ⁸	100 1 ²	100 11 ²²	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 46 ⁹²	100 2 ⁴	100 2 ⁴	100 50 ¹⁰⁰

Member's occupation and income were analyzed in the previous table. Majority of the members residing in home belong to household activities and do not possess any income.

Majority of the current elderly in India are illiterate, their living conditions mostly depend upon their co-residence with children and their ability to work beyond the official designated retirement age. This study confirms their pitiable condition in the case of income. Their low educational and occupational skills along with patriarchal condition of society yield them to this.

Table.5. Region of elderly residing in home and old-age home

Region	Home	Old-age home	Total
Rural	88 44 48	94 47 52	91 91 100
Urban	12 6 67	6 3 33	9 9 100
Total	100 50 50	100 50 50	100 100 100

In the above table (No.5) region of elderly were analyzed. Major share from rural area in this. Khakraborti and Ray (2006) stated that there are significant socio-economic differences between the urban and rural elderly in India.

Table. 6. Importance of education in co-operation among elderly

Education	Co-operation							
	Home				Old-age home			
	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Total	Good	Satisfactory	Bad	Total
Illiterate	10 2 34	8 2 33	33 2 33	12 6 100		29 8 53	78 7 47	30 15 100
Primary level	65 13 41	64 16 50	60 3 9	64 32 100	100 13 39	71 20 61		66 33 100

Secondary Level	20 4 ⁵⁰	16 4 ⁵⁰		16 8 ¹⁰⁰			22 2 ¹⁰⁰	4 2 ¹⁰⁰
Degree	5 1 ⁵⁰	4 1 ⁵⁰		4 2 ¹⁰⁰				
Above degree		8 2 ¹⁰⁰		4 2 ¹⁰⁰				
Total	100 20 ⁴⁰	100 25 ⁵⁰	100 5 ¹⁰	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 13 ²⁶	100 28 ⁵⁶	100 9 ¹⁸	100 50 ¹⁰⁰

In the table (6), importance of education in co-operation skill is analyzed. As the education levels increased, co-operation skills increased. The present study found out that elderly residing in home were more co-operative than their counter parts hailing in old-age home.

Table. 7. Importance of education in participation in domestic responsibility

	Home			Old-age home		
Education	Participated	Not participated	Total	Participated	Not participated	Total
Illiterate	13 6 ¹⁰⁰		12 6 ¹⁰⁰	37 7 ⁴⁷	26 8 ⁵³	30 15 ¹⁰⁰
Primary level	62 29 ⁹¹	100 3 ⁹	64 32 ¹⁰⁰	63 12 ³⁶	68 21 ⁶⁴	66 33 ¹⁰⁰
Secondary Level	17 8 ¹⁰⁰		16 8 ¹⁰⁰		6 2 ¹⁰⁰	4 2 ¹⁰⁰
Degree	4 2 ¹⁰⁰		4 2 ¹⁰⁰			
Above degree	4 2 ¹⁰⁰		4 2 ¹⁰⁰			
Total	100 47 ⁹⁴	100 3 ⁶	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 19 ³⁸	100 31 ⁶²	100 50 ¹⁰⁰

The participation of elderly in domestic responsibility in association with their education is analyzed in the table (no.7). Among the elderly residing in home, participation in domestic responsibility is very much greater than their counterparts. 100 percentage members (50) residing in home other than the primary levels participated in domestic responsibility. 91 percentage (29) of primary levels participated in the same. But in old-age home, 47 percentage (7) illiterates and 36 percentage (12) primary levels participated in domestic responsibility. The present study also stresses the informal care giving work of elderly women.

Table. 8. Leisure time activity (Home and old-age home)

Have leisure activity	Home	Old age home	Total
Yes	100 50 ⁵¹	96 48 ⁴⁹	98 98 ¹⁰⁰
No		4 2 ¹⁰⁰	2 2 ¹⁰⁰
Total	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 50 ¹⁰⁰	100 100 ¹⁰⁰

100 percentage (50) members living in home have leisure time activity. According to the above table members hailing in old-age home also have the same. It is much more behavioural reflex in the way of the life of mankind and the group as well. Socio-economic factors have much in influencing leisure and leisure use. By analyzing the above table, we get information about their enjoining. This is unavoidable in this later stage.

Table. 9. Communication skill (Home and old-age home)

Communication skill	Home	Old-age home	Total
Good	98 49 ⁵⁵	80 40 ⁴⁵	80 89 ¹⁰⁰
With difficulty	2 1 ¹⁰	18 9 ⁹⁰	18 10 ¹⁰⁰
Very poor		2 1 ¹⁰⁰	2 1 ¹⁰⁰

Total	100 50 50	100 50 50	100 100 100
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Major share in home, 98 percentage (49) have good ability in communication. In old-age home, 80 percentage (40) good ability in communication, 18 percentage (9) have some difficulty and remaining 2 percentage (1) were very poor in conversation. By analyzing the above table, one is confirmed that majority of elderly residing both in home and old-age home have good ability in communication. Thus they can adjust their present situation by linking people to their environment. Thus they can perform a social role and occupy significant status.

Table. 10. Frustration among elderly (home and old-age home)

Frustration	Home	Old-age home	Total
Yes	38 19 61	24 12 39	31 31 100
No	62 31 45	76 38 55	69 69 100
Total	100 50 50	100 50 50	100 100 100

Majority of elderly residing in home have no frustration in their situation. According to the study majority of them do not frustrated. This indicates their life skills which achieved through their experience.

Table. 11. Loneliness among elderly (home and old-age home)

Loneliness	Home	Old-age home	Total
Yes	38 19 66	20 10 34	29 29 100
No	62 31 44	80 40 56	71 71 100
Total	100 50 50	100 50 50	100 100 100

Majority of elderly residing in home do not feel loneliness in their situation.

Table. 12. Capacity to manage money, telephone possessions

Capacity to manage belongings	Home	Old-age home	Total
Dependent	8 4 40	12 6 60	10 10 100
Partially dependent	8 4 11	62 31 89	35 35 100
Not dependent	84 42 76	26 13 24	55 55 100
Total	100 50 50	100 50 50	100 100 100

By analyzing above table, it is clear that the elderly residing in old-age home were more dependent than their counter parts residing in home. May be this is one of the reason for admitting them in old-age home.

Conclusion

Ageing occurs due to biological, physical and psychological decay. Through this study we can understand elderly present condition which can be modified through systematic effort. From the present study, researcher comes into conclusion that as they are getting old, the chance for admission to old age home increases. Through the present study researcher comes into conclusion that their marital status have crucial role in deciding their social status. Relationship of education and occupation of elderly residing in home and old-age home analysis revealed that majority of them did not possess enough educational qualification which compels them to bind with unorganized unsecured sections. Due to this majority of them did not acquire enough financial support. This study also proclaims that elderly possess less occupational skill. According to this study elderly residing in home were more co-operative than their counter parts hailing in old-age home. Educational level positively affected to their co-operative skills but this has no effect on their household activities. They are not depending members, but they are dependable members of society. When we caged them in old-age home this situation is changed. Co-operative skills and participation in domestic responsibilities fluctuated. Majority of them possess enough skills for active participation in leisure time activity. Major share in home (98 percentage) have good ability in communication. According to the study majority of them do not frustrated. This indicates their life skills which achieved through their experience. Majority of elderly residing in home and old-age home do not feel loneliness in their situation. It is clear that the elderly residing in old-age home were more dependent than their counter parts residing in home.

According to the present work, it is capsulated that we should cultivate enough mindset to elevate life skills of elderly.

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