Spirituality as an Intervention in Old Age Home: Literature Review

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Abstract: The interest in the study of the spirituality as an intervention and self-control technique to cope with the stress and later life challenges is growing. When the old aged people live in OldAge home, challenges increase. To gain in-depth understanding of spirituality as an intervention more reviews of the scientific literature is required to explore this area of research. A computer assisted systematic search was conducted in Google Scholar and PUBMED. It was discussed that spirituality has become the powerful tool to get rid of loneliness, good mental health and all the obstacles which persons face in the last phase of their lives. There is need of more measures to incorporate spiritual practice in the OldAge home. Presently, it is ignored area which needs to be attended, especially, for older persons living in the OldAge home and who is suffering with cognitive decline.

Keywords: Spirituality, Older Adults, Old Age Home.

1. INTRODUCTION

Spirituality and ageing

Spirituality means quest for meaning in life. From the past few years, concept of the ageing has been the great and interested topic among the researchers to explore the concept of ageing. It is being researched extensively and interdisciplinary to solve the problems of elderly. According to the WHO report 2018, as the elders grow, lot of changes take place due to the accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage. These changes take place overtime. This leads to a gradual reduction in physical and mental capacity, resulting in the risk of disease and ultimately death. But these changes are neither linear nor consistent, and in years these are associated loosely with a person's age. The health and functioning of some 70-year-olds is extremely good, the other 70 year olds are fragile and require significant support from others. It is all due to the different circumstances in which they live.

Old Age Homes

India is the world's second-largest elderly population (60+) (Eleventh Five Year Plan Document 2007-2012). With the increase in life expectancy, the size of the geriatric population in India has gone from 20 million in 1951–100 million (8.3%) in 2014 and the number will rise to approximately 130 million by 2021 (Central Statistics programme, 2011). The concept of old age homes comes from Western culture, and large numbers of the old home are now being established in India. The first old-age home emerged in Thrissur, Kerala, set up by Cochin's Raja in 1911 and was called the old-age home of Raja Verma. HelpAge supports old age homes in 23 states of India. Old age home is an alternative shelter where the aged have no one to take care of them. The family structure has been the average Indian's socioeconomic backbone (Shah, 1998). Changes in family structure and psychosocial system often force elderly people to live alone or move from their homes to institutional homes, i.e., old age (Dotty, 1992; Kumar et al., 2012). OAHs come into existence as a modern profession for aged people and become the need of present Indian society. Lack of care in the home, lack of infrastructure, financial constraints and breakup of the joint family are some of the prominent factors lead to the establishment of the OldAge homes in the country.

OldAge home provides all facilities to the inmates such as food, clothes, medical facilities but the elders in the OldAge home feel lonely, lack of the social support, emotional support and economically they are very weak (Gupta et al., 2014). They cannot share their feelings, their liking, and their experiences in this kind of settlement with each other. They operate according to certain rules and regulations in an organizational set-up (Panday et al., 2015). Therefore, due to lack of social support, family support, economic constraints and loneliness, they suffer from psychological distress. Spirituality at this stage means to involve themselves in the spiritual practices daily. Spirituality develops a framework which guides individuals in challenging life situations, and often encourages concrete insights. Spirituality is a powerful late-life resource which helps many older adults to adapt to changing individual needs. Research suggests that spirituality is associated with self-acceptance as aging, and is helpful in allowing individuals to identify themselves as aging (Manning, 2012).

In old age households, people had very little chance of going anywhere, hence, their social welfare was not good compared to people living with their own families. This demographic category is more prone to issues such as physical health and mental health issues. Elderly people are the door of the past. Elders are moving out of their home and shifted to the old age home.

Spirituality and mental health
The literature shows the mental health benefits of spirituality (Balboni, et al., 2007; Malone & Dadswell, 2018). Spirituality fosters positive relationships through numerous therapies for life satisfaction, psychosocial well-being, physical and mental health, and is useful in finding meaning and purpose in life (Moberg, 2006). Crowther et al. (2002) suggested that positive spirituality should be defined by maintaining an internalized relationship with the sacred and transcendent world that is not limited by gender, race, economics or class, promoting the well-being of the elderly. Spirituality plays very important role in ageing (Arcury, Quandt, McDonald, & Bell, 2000). Mental distress and mental illness can be minimised by practice of spirituality. Spirituality can also help people to realize what they are feeling (Saleem & Khan, 2015). Spirituality leads to the creation of virtues such as empathy, integrity, endurance, a sense

of detachment, compassion and tolerance, trust and hope. Several studies suggest that the realization of spiritual values and perceptions includes several non-dominant areas of the brain (Abraham, 2004; Saver & Rabin, 1997). Elderly people face more mental health problems than other age groups. (Reddy, Chandra Shekhar, 1998, Tiwari, 2000). The literature available shows that there is hardly any effort to understand the role of spirituality for older people and there are hardly any specific studies pertaining to the problem (Nandi, 1997; Branch, 1984; Palmore, 1976).

India has very rich cultural heritage and diversity in the world and also has diversity in language, culture and lifestyle (Chaturvedi, 1993). One quarter of older adults (20.5 %) have mental illness (Tiwari & Pandey, 2012). The research review suggested that there is great need of the spirituality in OldAge home but it varies according to the individual needs and the situation in which the older persons are residing. Spirituality includes various outcomes when taken as practice such as integrity, humanistic concern, valuing the relations (Dalby, 2006). According to Moberg (2006) in OldAge homes there is growing exposure to spirituality. Spirituality is complicated, it seems to overlaps with religion, but both are different concepts nearly all of the research reveals the importance of nutrition and other environmental aspects in dealing with mental health problems. There is paramount need to stress upon the spirituality apart from nutrition and other environmental aspects in institutional settings for dealing with mental health problems.

Research studies related to spirituality
Various research studies show the role of the spirituality in dealing with mental health issues and cope with daily life challenges that are obstacle in life of elderly people. Some of the clinical studies related to spirituality are discussed in current article. Lavretsky (2010) provides spirituality information, as well as spiritual interventions relating to aging, mental and physical health, and coping with death. Coleman (2005) discussed health implications of religious belief and practice. Result of the study showed that religious beliefs and the practice help in improving the health of the aged persons. Chaves et al. (2015) studied older people's concepts of spirituality, related to aging and quality of life. Spirituality helps in understanding its value and relevance to the quality of life of living an old aged individual. Kumar and Ilango (2012) conducted research on spirituality, stress and wellbeing of elderly practising spirituality. Findings showed that practicing of the spirituality helps in minimizing stress and improving wellbeing of the elderly people.

Spiritual interventions for elderly people in institutional settings (OldAge Homes)
Literature review suggested that spiritual interventions may be incorporated in daily activities so that elderly people attain the stability at this stage. Some of the daily routine practices by an expert or the head of the institution should be incorporated for their better way of living at this stage.

Routine of Spiritual practices
From the existing literature it was found that daily spiritual practices should be incorporated for better and good standard of living for elders at the last phase of life. Continuity of these practices helps to maintain the good standard of living when there is no one to care for them.

Prayers

Daily routine prayers to the great power and attending to the religious place help each person to get the peace of mind and which can provide support in time of difficulty. Goldsmith (2004) recognizes continuity of worship to the divine power tap into divine memory.

Listening to religious Music/song

Listening to the religious music produces a positive effect on the mind and increases the wellbeing of the person who is involved in spiritual practices. Review by Lipe (2002) on effect of the listening music on wellbeing reveals positive results.

Spiritual reminiscence

Talking about past spiritual events provides an opportunity for older people to gain in-depth knowledge of spiritual needs (Mackinlay, 2010). Spirituality helped to build stronger relationships between soul and mind.

Spirituality in clinical settings

Spiritual interventions should include some of the steps for clinical practices. Psychiatrists or clinical experts can consider these steps for adding the spirituality as an approach to get rid of the mental illness. Information regarding the spiritual background while talking to the older person helps in coping with the distress. Questionnaires help in collecting the data and gain insights about history of spirituality. Discussion with the patient on spiritual matter helps in strengthening the therapeutic relationship (King, 2006). Listening the spiritual belief help the therapist to maintain the good rapport with the client which helps in overcoming the problems. Spiritually Augmented Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (SACBT), a psychotherapeutic method, given by D'Souza in 2004 at the University of Sydney is a new treatment method that integrates spiritual values into cognitive behavioural therapy and aims to reduce stress, anxiety and depression at any point by integrating spiritual practices at this level. SACBT covers four key areas like acceptance, hope, meaning and purpose, and forgiveness. These four areas help to overcome the behavioural related problems. This is the new and effective therapy especially for the elderly people living in the old age homes.

Digital App to care for Elderly

World Health Organization (WHO) on Sept. 2019 released a set of services by the World Health Organization (WHO) providing better treatment to older people. Innovative digital informational application WHO ICOPE Handbook App enables practical instruction to resolve key conditions including limitations on mobility, vision and hearing loss, cognitive impairment, depression symptoms, malnutrition and social support. To reduce inequalities these initiatives may be helpful by improving the training of health and social care workers for serving the complex needs of elderly people in need. Empowering elderly people and enabling their increased participation in good health and social inclusion are ways of reducing inequalities.

2. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

In the field of wellness, spirituality is not recognized as having a huge potential for transformation of individual and society. So, for the elderly people in our country whether they are in institutional settings or in non-institutional settings they have to go for daily spiritual practice so that they will be living stress free life and maintain good quality of life.

A majority of experts have confusion in between 'religion' and 'spirituality' but both concepts are different. Spirituality in psychotherapy and, on the other hand, patients with spiritual problems feels unhappy and agitated by mental health professionals ' unempathic attitude. Professionals do not get an opportunity to be sensitive to the spiritual domain and to deal with such issues in clinical practice. They do not know how best to further the spiritual development of a person.

There is lack of research on the spirituality and its role in mental health. Training and awareness of spirituality should be included in the mental health academic programmes. Researchers should gain more insight into the spirituality's role in improving mental health, particularly of old aged people.

Above discussion helps the counsellors and decision makers to implement spiritual practice during the aging. New research needs to be emphasised recognizing the needs of this vulnerable population and to develop strategies for holistic wellbeing. There is sufficient argument to suggest the spirituality among the elderly people for their therapeutic need (McFadden, Kimble, Ellor, Seeber, & Rost, 2011; Peloso, 2008; Bradshaw, Ellison, & Flannelly, 2008). Indian context is particularly important because rich spiritual heritage is already available which may be utilised as an intervention as well. the significance of spirituality in old age. The key argument would be how spirituality in the OldAge home contributes to the good standard of living and mental wellbeing of elderly people.

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Priya Choudhary is a PhD scholar in psychology department, Lovely Professional University. She participates in symposia and seminar regularly. She has published research articles in her interest areas emotional and spiritual intelligence, old aged people, stress, happiness and meaningful life.

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