

Cultural & Contextual Influences in Depressive Feelings: A Focus on Elderly Nursing Home  
Residents

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## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Environmental Impacts on Elderly Individuals' Depressive Tendencies**

The transition of an elderly person from a home care environment to a formal nursing home facility can be a highly stressful process. There are various physical and psychological changes which the elderly person has to make, to adjust to the new surroundings. The environmental factors which are present in the nursing home facilities have a major impact on the psychological condition of these individuals. The elderly individuals have different perceptions regarding the way they want to be treated. It is important for the nursing home facilities to ensure that the personal need satisfaction requirements of the elderly individuals are highlighted. The issue which is faced by the health care professions in this initiative is the subjective needs of every individual. The elderly individuals who enter the nursing facilities are in a highly sensitive psychological state. Hence in the initial period these individuals have a negative perception regarding the services and the facilities which are provided in the nursing home environment (Choi et Al, 2008). Certain individuals perceive adequate support from the nursing home staff as a positive service; whereas other elderly individual might perceive these activities as demeaning in nature. These individuals significantly value the independence factor is very important and hence their self-esteem levels are highly correlated with their ability to perform the daily personal life activities. The nursing home facilities hence have to develop comprehensive strategies to identify the caring requirements for each individual elderly individual, so as to help them adapt to the new environment (Herrefors et Al, 2009). Since the diverse individuals have different perception regarding the most effective caring strategies, the nursing home institutes have to ensure that they have the adequate facilities. The facilities and the support services which are provided to the elderly individuals however have to be aligned with the subjective perceptions of every individual.

Through this strategy the nursing home facility would be able to provide the elderly individuals with a conducive health care and social environment, which would help them, adjust to the massive change in their lives. The environmental factors associated with the nursing home facilities have a major impact on the level of psychological stress which is experienced by these individuals. The health care professionals present at the nursing home facilities have to highlight the personal preferences of the elderly individuals in the different stages of their stay in the nursing home facilities. The majority of the new individuals in the nursing home facilities have a higher level of psychological stress and depressive tendencies as compared to the other individuals (Chung, 2008). The nursing home professionals have to ensure that they can identify the personal care requirements of the elderly individuals at the various stages, and hence provide the care with dignity. The elderly individuals want to live in a social environment where they do not feel isolated or debased; hence the ability of the nursing home facility to provide the personalized level of services and care activities can have a positive impact on the psychological condition of these individuals.

#### Impact of Staff Relations on individuals' Depressive Tendencies

The staff relations have a significant impact on the psychological wellbeing of the elderly individuals who transfer to the nursing home. The elderly individuals require a positive and stress free environment, where they can effectively communicate with the nursing personnel. The increase in the multi-cultural diversity factor, in the majority of the western societies, has created a new dilemma for the nursing home facilities. The staff personnel which are present in these facilities have to ensure that it can understand the socio cultural attributes of the elderly individuals. The transition to the nursing home is a major change for the elderly individuals, and hence they prefer to live in a familiar environment. The socio cultural differences which are present in the nursing home environments can

become major stress factors for these individuals. Communication plays a vital role in the ability of the elderly individuals to adjust to the nursing home facility. In this scenario if the staff personnel are not aware of the socio cultural attributes of the elderly individuals, there can be major communication based issues. Hence in order to alleviate these issues, the nursing home facilities have to develop comprehensive training programs for the nursing home professionals (Ron, 2004). Through these training initiatives the nursing home staff would be better able to understand and communicate with the socio culturally diverse elderly individuals. Through ineffective communication based relation the staff would be able to provide the residents with the adequate level of care and dignity. The nursing home staff has a major role in the adjustment process of the elderly individuals who are present in the nursing home facilities. These are the individuals have to have to develop the interpersonal relations with the elderly individuals, and also highlight the various issues which might be expected by the residents.

The interpersonal relation which the staff is able to develop with the nursing home residents, has a substantial impact on the psychological wellbeing of the individuals. This relation closely resembles the family oriented relation which the elderly individuals would have developed in the past. In the home environments the families of the elderly have the primary responsibly to care for these individuals; however this responsibility is overtaken by the staff; as these individuals transfer to the nursing home facilities (Greaten et Al, 2007). The nursing home staff has to identify the sigfnicant of the relation which they developed with the elderly individuals. It is not only a care oriented relation; rather this relation also has a sigfnicant psychological value for the elderly individuals. The staff has to develop an intimate relation with the elderly individuals, so as to diminish their level of anxiety and depressive tendencies. In the latter stages of their lives the elderly individuals value the close interpersonal relations that they are able to develop. Without the adequate interposal relations

developed with the staff, the elderly individuals might experience depressive tendencies. These individuals would feel socially isolated in the nursing home facilities, and hence leading to reduced self-esteem. The depression among the elderly individuals can also have an impact on their physical conditions, and hence these individuals may also develop various medical dilemmas. The significance of interpersonal relations with the nursing home staff is very high for the psychological wellbeing of the elderly individuals (Herrefors et Al, 2009). The staff has to identify the impact of these relations on the psychological and the physical conditions of the elderly individuals. The development of empathy and compassion among the nursing facility staff members is very important. These individuals have to develop the capabilities to develop actual interpersonal relations with the elderly individuals in the nursing facilities, so that they can effectively adjust to their new change in their lives.

#### Positive Impact of Socialization & Leisure Activities

The physical leisure activities have a positive impact on the psychological health of the older individuals. The issue which is present among the majority of the elderly individuals who arrive at the nursing homes is that they have very limited physical lifestyles. In their family lives the elderly individuals have a very inactive lifestyle, which can create issues when they transfer to the nursing home facilities. The physical exercise and leisure activities can reduce the depressive tendencies which are experienced by the elderly individuals. The nursing home staff has to conduct an intervention in the lives of the residents, and hence introduce them to the various physical leisure activities. The physical leisure activities have to focus on the socialization factor. It is important that the elderly individuals do not perceive the physical activity as a formal exercising process; rather it has to be developed as a socialization process (Custers et Al, 2010). The socialization aspect would allow the elderly individuals to develop a positive perception regarding the exercise.

There is a strong correlation present between the physical wellbeing of the physical and the psychological condition. The healthy lifestyle developed by the elderly individuals within the nursing home environments, would allow them to diminish the depressive tendencies and hence become a proactive member of the social environment. The nursing home staff has to intervene in the lifestyle of the residents, and help them initiate physical oriented leisure activities. These exercises can also allow the elderly individual to develop new social relations among other residents. The major issue which increases the depressive tendencies among the nursing home residents can be identified as the lack of social relations (Hunter & Gillen, 2009). The physical leisure activities which can be based on the various out door games and social activities can provide the residents with the opportunity to positively interact with each other and develop social relations (Davidson et Al, 2009). The primary objective of developing physical oriented leisure activities among the residents is to create a positive social environment, in which the elderly individual can develop a healthy lifestyle.

### **The Influence of the Psychosocial Factors**

#### **The Loneliness Factor & the Absence of Spouse**

In the old age the loss of a spouse can be identified as a major psychological dilemma which is experienced by the elderly individuals. The other factors such as the deteriorating physical and the psychological capabilities also have an impact on the self-esteem of these individuals; however the loss of the spouses is major life event. The loss of the long term partners causes the elderly individuals to lose hope and motivation regarding their future lives. The transfer to the nursing home facilities can further enhance these negative beliefs, and hence can lead to depressive tendencies. The relation which the elderly individuals have developed with their spouses, throughout their lives has a major impact on their attitudes and behaviours. It is important for the nursing home staff to identify that they cannot completely

help the elderly residents, overcome the grief of the loss of a spouse. However the role of the staff should be to help the residents cope with the grief and hence look forward to their future lives. The loss of a spouse is major life event, which cannot be completely resolved by the nursing home staff (Wang et Al, 2011). The residents have issues coping with the psychological issues present in adapting to the nursing home environments, without the support of their spouses. Throughout their lives the married individuals develop an emotional and psychological dependence upon each other.

The marital status of these individuals hence becomes a major component of their attitudes and personalities. Due to the loss of the spouse, the stress coping capabilities of the elderly individuals hence diminish drastically. These individuals are not able to adequately handle the stress associated with making a massive change in their personal lives. This factor has a strong correlation with the development of depression among the elderly individuals. The staff in this scenario has to ensure that they can empathize with the residents. The role of the staff should not be to help these individuals recover from the grief directly; rather they should encourage the residents to focus on other aspects of their lives. The loneliness factor which is experienced by the elderly residents can be diminished through the development of a healthy social life. The staff has to make these individuals understand that their lives are not meaningless, and they still have to become a proactive member of the society. The communication with these residents would ensure that they do not isolate themselves, and hence develop depressive tendencies. Depression can have major impact on the physical wellbeing of the residents, and can drastically reduce the quality of life experienced by these individuals. The staff has to help the residents cope with the grief and develop a positive social life. Human interaction is a major component of the depression reduction techniques, which are implemented by the nursing home staff.



The reminiscence therapy is a major anti depression which is used to help the elderly individuals, cope with the various psychological issues. This therapy is based on helping the elderly people focus on their past lives and hence develop a sense of motivation from the initiative. The reminiscence therapy is highly popular among the elder generation individuals, who develop depressive tendencies. The major depression oriented issue faced by the elderly individuals is the reduction in the sense of purpose. The diminishing of the psychological and the physical capabilities causes these people to develop a very negative self-opinion. These individuals start to perceive themselves as beings, who have now reached the final stage of their life (Tsai et Al, 2010). This is a very negative belief which is developed among the elderly, which can have a significant impact on the quality of their lives. This issue is more prominent in the elderly population residing in the nursing home facilities. The nursing home institutes are perceived as demanding entities, which highlight the inability of the elderly people to function in the society. The reminiscence therapy can help these individuals focus on the positive aspects of their previous lives. The therapy is focused on aligning the positive past experience and self-perceptions, in the later stages of the lives of an individual. The elderly individuals, who are suffering from the depressive tendencies, can attain motivation from thinking about their previous lives.

#### Depression Coping Strategies 'Reminiscing Therapy'

There are two forms of reminiscing therapies which are conducting among the depressed elderly resident within the nursing home facilities. The instrumental reminiscing therapy is focused on the positive past experiences of these individuals. In these therapies the elderly individuals are encouraged to think about the stress and the depression coping capabilities, which they had developed in the past. The purpose of these therapies is to utilize the stress handling strategies which the elderly individuals had developed in their past lives to

cope with the issues which are present in the current scenario. The participants in these therapies are encouraged to focus on both the good and the bad experienced in their lives and hence they can use this knowledge to enhance their self-esteems (Kane, 1991). The description of the previous positive life events can allow the elderly people, to relive their past experiences. The actions which these individuals implemented to cope with the past issues, can also be applied in their current environments. The reminiscing of the past positive experiences can have substantial impact on the psychological health of the elderly individuals within the nursing home facilities.

The integrative reminiscing therapy is a more complex initiative which causes the elderly individuals to resolve the issues which they have experienced in the past. The instrumental reminiscing therapy is most commonly used among the elderly residents, as it is focused on the positive life experiences. However in certain situations the residents might experience very high levels of depression, based on the low self-esteem. This low self-esteem is developed through the negative self-perception, which is developed through the past life experiences (Nihtila & Martikainen, 2008). The integrative reminiscing therapy in this scenario helps the elderly individuals to help resolve these issues. The main objective of this therapy is to reduce the influence of the negative memories of the elderly on their thinking process, and reinforce the positive life memories. The individuals are encouraged to question their negative self-perception ideals, and hence alleviate these dilemmas. This form of reminiscing therapy is a very complex process, and can have a negative impact on the individual. As the person has to focus on the negative past memories, there is a significant risk of enhancing the depressive tendencies among these individuals. The therapists have to ensure that they can develop a strong level of trust and communication, with the residents; prior to the implementation of this therapy. Although this therapy has a certain level of risk associated with it, the effectiveness of the therapy is also very high. As the elderly individuals

are able to resolve the past dilemmas which they have experienced throughout their lives they develop a positive perception regarding them. The integrative reminiscing therapy can provide the elderly residents with the opportunity to enhance their self-esteems and hence diminish the depressive tendencies. This therapy can be used to help the depressed elderly individual to change their negative self-perceptions, and hence focus on their positive life experiences. The reminiscing therapies have a crucial impact on the alleviation of the depression issues which are faced by the elderly individuals present in the nursing home facilities (Callopy, 1988). The people have developed a negative self-perception, and hence they require the motivation to focus on the positive aspects of their past lives. Through these initiatives the therapists can help the elderly individuals enhance their psychological and also the physical health standards.

### **The Impact of Residents' Values & Norms**

There are various reasons for the development of depressive tendencies among the elderly individuals within the nursing facilities. In the latter stage of their lives, these individuals develop a very negative view regarding their future. At this stage of their lives, the spiritual and religious factors have a major influence on the attitude of the elderly. These individuals have to cope with uncertainty and the ambiguity related to the concept of death and after life. The religious and spiritual view in this scenario can help the elderly individuals to cope with the depressive factors (Angel & Angel, 1997). The religious beliefs can diminish the uncertainty which is related to the concept of death. The religious behaviours of individuals increase in the later part of their lives, as they start to focus on their future. The nursing home facilities have to provide the relevant religious facilities to the residents. This activity becomes very complex in the current scenario, as the socio cultural diversity factor has increased in the overall society (Cagney & Agree, 1999). The staff has to increase the

knowledge regarding the diversified religious and spiritual beliefs, which are present in the contemporary social environment.

The role of the family structure and relations also has a significant impact on the psychological health of elderly individuals present in the nursing homes. The individuals, who have lived in a dysfunctional family life, are prone to develop depression based dilemmas. The individuals have to be provided with extensive care in the nursing homes. The self-esteem of the elderly individuals has suffered through the experiences in the dysfunctional family entity (Bowes et Al, 2011). On the other hand the residents with a positive family life, prior to the arrival in the nursing home, have relatively better depression coping skills. The nursing home staff has to identify the psychological requirements of every elderly individual and hence provide them with the relevant level of care (Oliveira et Al, 2014). These individuals have to be encouraged to develop a certain level of autonomy and independence, so that their self-esteem can be bolstered. The major factor which causes the elderly individuals to develop depressive tendencies is the belief that they are no longer able to take care of themselves (Chaaya et Al, 2007). The nursing home staff has to ensure that through a progressive development process, these individuals are provided with encouragement to become more confident and autonomous in nature.

### **The Institutionalization Process**

The communication barrier is a major dilemma experienced by the elderly residents which belong to the socio cultural minorities. The massive change socio cultural change which these elderly individuals experience, hence they transfer to the nursing homes, can cause them to develop serious depression oriented dilemmas (Royse et Al, 2010). The language barrier diminishes the ability of these residents to effectively communicate with the staff, and develop an interpersonal relation with other residents. These individuals have to be

provided with the relevant support and assistance from the nursing home staff (Chow et Al, 2004). The staff has to make an extra effort to learn about the socio cultural attributes of the relevant minorities. This effort is required to help develop positive relation with the socio culturally diverse residents. The concept of transformational nursing leadership is focused on developing a strong interpersonal relation with the elderly individuals. In this perspective the nursing professionals have to develop versatile skills to help support the psychological development of the residents (Lai, 2004). The initial institutionalization process is very challenging for the elderly individuals belonging to the socio cultural minorities, and hence through the transformational leadership role, the staff can help provide them with a conducive and positive social environment, which would help them cope with depression related issues.

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