

Satisfaction of Old Age Allowance among Senior Citizen in Lamjung District, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The old age allowance is the non-contribution allowance provided by the government of Nepal to improve the social and economic status of older people. The purpose of this study was to compare the social and economic impact of old age allowance and its satisfaction on older people in rural and urban areas in Nepal. A cross sectional, quantitative study was conducted in two different areas (Sunderbazar municipality and Kwholasothar rural municipality) in Lamjung. The information was collected from 202 elderly people (55.4% from urban and 90 (44.6%) from rural areas) to know about their satisfaction in various aspects like social, economic, health, etc. regarding allowance by face-to-face interview. Chi-square test, t-test as well as One- way ANOVA tests were applied to find the factors associated with the satisfaction of elderly people among rural and urban areas. Elderly in rural were more satisfied than elderly from urban areas. The respondents in rural areas were satisfied in all five domains social, health, economic, basic needs and self-esteem but the respondents in urban areas were found to be satisfied only in two domains; self-respect and economic. The satisfaction of respondents with OAA is different in urban and rural areas. People who were satisfied with this allowance reported that it was an honor from the government and they can use this money on their own. It is an important contribution to keeping older people connected with family and community.

Keywords: *Nepal, old age allowance, satisfaction, utilization*

INTRODUCTION

The Old Age Allowance (OAA) is the allowance provided by the government to improve the quality of life of older people. Elderlies are usually considered as a group of the inactive population who face lots of problems (Donaldson et al., 2015). The World Health Organization (2010) mentions that 65 years is the standard age for a person to be 'elderly' or older based on the instances from many developed countries. In Nepal, the Senior Citizens Act of 2063 defines a senior citizen as someone who is 60 years old or older (Khanal, 2013), however, the

age limit for elderly varies by the service sector. In general, the elderly are those individuals who are in their later years and thus unable to support themselves mostly due to old age, which is often considered 60 and virtually over that. In Nepal, 2.1 million elderly people were representing about 9 % of the total population of the country in 2011. The increasing rate of elderly is not only the case in Nepal but also in many countries all over the globe and the proportion of the elderly population is still higher (Chalise, 2006). According to (Regmi, 1970), acute economic constraints, the disintegration of the joint family system, and migration are said to be some of the major challenges to many Nepalese communities' traditional and cultural value systems. Across countries worldwide, poverty is the single greatest obstacle to a secure old age (Acharya, 2018).

Numerous governments have established a multipolar pension model for the welfare and social security of older people. The government of Japan has provided pensions through non contributory schemes similar to those in Nepal. Other countries, such as Korea, have provided pensions financed from a contributory scheme. Several studies have been conducted in the past to learn, explore, and analyze the situations of elderly people in Nepal. In 2003, the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) performed field study with the help of Help Age International to learn more about the socioeconomic realities of Nepal's elderly. (Pun et al., 2009) investigated social change among Nepalese older adults in a research. Another major piece of law is the Local Self Governance Act of 1999, which takes decisions on issues impacting the lives of people in lower administrative units, such as the protection and development of orphan children, the defenseless, women, the elderly, and the disabled. Similar to the Vienna Conference and the United Nations Principles for Ageing, Nepal's Senior Citizen Policy 2058 is a fundamental policy document dealing with the challenges of its older population. It is based on a working plan as directed by the Vienna Conference and the United Nations Principles for Ageing (Geriatric center Nepal, 2010).

The Senior Citizen Act of 2063, as amended by the Senior Citizen Regulations of 2065, protects the social, economic, and human rights of the elderly. The goal of this Act is to preserve and provide social security for the country's elderly population. Nepal's Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) established a policy framework for improving older people's livelihoods, with a focus on initiatives that would strengthen their self-esteem, economic prospects, respect, and social security (Geriatric center Nepal, 2010). In 1995, the Nepalese government began providing an old age allowance to improve the quality of life for elderly people, promote social fairness, and provide economic and emotional assistance through a noncontributory pension

program (International Labour Office, 2018). The amount of old age allowance supports minimum basic requirements and is a crucial source of income to help older people become independent. The amount of old age allowance supports minimum basic requirements and is a crucial source of income to help older people become independent (Ramya, 2014). This study aimed to assess the satisfaction with and utilization patterns of the old age allowance among older people in Nepal.

DATA AND METHODS

A cross sectional, quantitative study was conducted in Sundarbazar Municipality and Kwholasothar Rural Municipality of Lamjung, Nepal during January and February 2020. Men and women of age 70 years and above including widows and Dalits aged above 60 years living in the proposed study area who received Old Age Allowance were the populations of the study. All the elderly men and women in the study area who were not unresponsive to giving information were eligible in the study and included in the interview. The information was carried out purposively from 202 respondents (112 from Sundarbazar and 92 from Kwolasother).

The study was based on primary data collected through a pre-structured questionnaire having 26 questions of different socio-demographic and economic variables and each question has five responses categorized Likert scale (Long Form). The direct face-to-face interview was carried out for data collection. The questionnaire contains three parts, demographic information, utilization of OAA and Satisfaction (Social, Health, Economic, Self-respect and Basic needs related).

To gain a better insight into the subject matter and to unravel and understand problems, a questionnaire is developed with five points rating scale. A total of 202 individuals (112 from urban and 90 from rural) were drawn from purposive ways. Verbal informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure the right of the subject.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analyzing the data. Data were expressed as proportions mean and standard deviation. Association of socio-demographic variables with satisfaction levels was done by using Chi-square test, independent samples t-test, or fishers-exact test. Analysis was carried out at a 5% level of significance and p-value < 0.05 was considered a significant value. SPSS version 20 was used for statistical analysis.

The questionnaire's validity was maintained by employing conventional survey questions that had already been evaluated for evaluating satisfaction levels. The questionnaire was also translated into the Nepali language with the help of specialists for easier comprehension by

locals. A pilot study was conducted among 10 elderly subjects in a different area and the questionnaire was pretested. After obtaining written informed consent the questionnaire was administered to the subject. Data was checked for errors and omissions on the consistency of data was maintained by using different methods, and evidence. The observation was carried out to support the data for getting support and more information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Characteristics

Socio-demographic variables include age, sex, education, marital status, living with spouse, number of offspring, previous types of family, caste/ethnic group, religion, permanent address of the respondents. The majority of respondents were female, 62.4 % (54.4% in rural and 68.8% in urban). The total percentage of a male was 37.6%, which is because widows are allowed to receive the aforementioned privilege after 60 years. The mean age of respondents was 71.36 years (73.4 years in rural and 69.7 years in urban). The maximum age was 96 years and the minimum age was found to be 60 years. Among the respondents 69.3% of respondents were illiterate and 30.7 % were literate.

Table 1

Respondents Classified According to Selected Background Characteristics

Characteristics		Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Total (%)
Gender	Male	45.6	31.3	37.6
	Female	54.4	68.8	62.4
Caste	Brahmin	2.2	42.9	24.8
	Ethnic	73.3	32.1	50.5
	Dalit	24.4	25	24.8
Marital Status	Married	64.4	60.7	62.4
	Married/widow	27.8	36.6	32.7
	Separated	7.8	2.7	5
Religion	Hindu	63.3	100	83.7
	Buddhist	33.3	0	14.9
	Others	3.3	0	1.5
Education	Illiterate	67.8	70.5	69.3
	Literate	32.2	29.5	30.7
Age	<70	31.2	46.4	39.6
	70 – 80	24.4	22.3	23.3

Satisfaction towards Old Age Allowance

To know about the responses of elderly people in the process of getting an allowance, positive change arriving in their life and need to increase the amount of allowance, three separate questions were asked with 5 scaling orders (1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree). The responses of respondents just reverse in rural and urban areas.

Table 2

Level of Satisfaction towards the Old Age Allowance

Level of Satisfaction		Satisfaction Level				
		1	2	3	4	5
Process of Getting OAA (%)	Rural	0	0	2.2	6.7	91.1
	Urban	0.9	23.2	4.5	69.6	1.8
Occurrence of positive changes in Life by OAA (%)	Rural	0.0	0.0	1.1	28.9	70.0
	Urban	2.7	67.9	4.5	25.0	0.00
Need to increase OAA (%)	Rural	0.0	0.0	6.7	22.2	71.1
	Urban	0.0	1.8	0.9	0.0	97.3

To measure the overall satisfaction on OAA, a yes or no answer question was asked to the respondents. Among all the respondents, 49.5% were satisfied with OAA. The satisfaction percentage was much higher (84.44%) in rural than in urban. The satisfaction level of different aspects social, self-respect, economic, health, and basic needs are greater mean (3) in a rural area.

The Dissatisfaction occurred due to administrative difficulties and difficulty to travel to the bank due to old age. A chi-squared test was applied to find the factors associated with overall satisfaction. There is high degree of association at 5% level of significance ($P < 0.01$) between resident and satisfaction. The satisfaction level of respondents is different in urban and rural areas. From independent samples test (t – test), there is a high degree of significant difference in satisfaction among elderly population with different resident ($t = -11.366$, d. f. = 200 and $P < 0.01$). From the independent chi-square test, the impact of OAA in all the five aspects (self-respect, increase of economic condition, increase of health condition, help to fulfill the basic needs and increase of social status) separately is highly associated with a resident ($P < 0.01$).

Table 3*Satisfaction towards the Old Age Allowance According to Major Dimensions of Life*

Dimensions	Rural	Urban
	$\mu \pm \sigma$	$\mu \pm \sigma$
Satisfaction in basic needs	4.14 \pm 0.58	2.22 \pm 0.8
Satisfaction in self- respect	4.28 \pm 0.51	3.99 \pm 0.98
Satisfaction in economic situation	4.46 \pm 0.52	2.5 \pm 0.58
Satisfaction in health condition	4.25 \pm 0.85	2.7 \pm 0.24
Satisfaction in social status	3.33 \pm 1.04	3.55 \pm 0.44

Over the half of the older people (49.5 percent) were happy with the OAA. The satisfaction level of older people was found as 58.6% in research conducted by the author in Kumal community in the same district (Sedhai, 2020). This result is also lower than that of a research performed by the Nepalese government's National Planning Commission in 2012, which found that 66.0 percent of older persons were happy with their allowance and 9.0 percent were extremely satisfied (NPC, 2012). The satisfaction scale component of contribution to religious rituals was connected with the highest level of satisfaction 81.9%. Satisfaction with the allowance was linked to family connections, but discontent was linked to larger allowance expectations. Personal expenses accounted for 91.4 percent of the allowance, followed by health and medicine 75.0 % (Dhungana et al., 2020). The amount of OAA has increased by 3000 rupees (26.7 USD) in 2019 but the price of goods increasing rapidly day by day may have contributed to a decrease in the level of satisfaction with the allowance. The study found that satisfaction with the Old Age Allowance was not associated with age, sex and other demographic variables but associated with a resident, which is consistent with some previous work but in contrast to the Nepal National Planning Commission findings that older men were more satisfied with the allowance than older women (NPC, 2012). The current study found a level positive relationship between satisfaction with the allowance and resident ($P < .000$). This may be due to differences in study design.

CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents felt that the allowance is negligible and has to be increased. Most of them were unsatisfied due to the location of the bank. The majority of the respondents used it for their requirements. Less than half of respondents were satisfied with the allowance. The respondents in rural areas were more satisfied than in urban areas. This study concluded that financial assistance to the elderly empowers them and improves their overall quality of

life. A thorough investigation into OAA is essential, and the government should take steps to improve OAA administration by using methods other than cash to ensure the program's long-term viability.

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