

The Emergence of Old Age Homes and Social Issues in Nepal

Narayan Babu Shrestha

Assistant Lecturer, Shaheed Smriti Multiple Campus Ratnanagar Chitwan

Abstract

The aim of the study is to explore the concept of elderly care in Nepalese society and its changing meaning in the modern times. Specially, this study tries to address the causes of old age homes are becoming a trend in Nepalese society. A cross sectional study was conducted mainly focusing on these facilities within the Kathmandu valley. A descriptive research design has been used whilst 18 elderlies who are living in private old age home were completed structured interviews for collecting data from three private owned old age home of Lalitpur and Kathmandu. The data were collected through the survey questionnaire analyzed with the help of SPSS software. Most of the respondents they are being there not only due to family's member were abroad or migration or other issue. The trend of private old age home are becoming trend, whose family's members are in Nepal but they were not properly cared from their children due to busy schedule that's cause their families choosing this arrangement.

Keywords: *Old Age, Old age home, aging in Nepal & elderly care.*

Background of the study: Ageing is a normal process, which is associated with physical, social and psychological changes. The number of older populations of both developed and developing countries has considerably increased in the 20th century. According to the 2001 census of Nepal, its elderly population constituted 6.5 percent of the total population of the country. During the years 1991-2001, the annual elderly population growth rate was 3.39 percent as against the national population growth rate of 2.3%. According to the 2011 census, the percentage of elderly population has increased to 9.1 percent. The number of seniors will increase because 54.7% of the total population is within the age group of 15-59, which is reproductive. As Nepal marches towards modernity and economic prosperity, many of her traditional values seem to be unravelling in the process. One of them is a very sensitive yet unignorable issue of elderly care in this country. From time immemorial, it had been a foregone conclusion that parents take care of their children, and children in turn return the favour in due course of time. This had been an unalterable social structure which to this day holds true for many (Ranjan, 2013).

In 2021, population aged 65 years and above for Nepal was 5.9 %. Population aged 65 years and above of Nepal increased from 3.1 % in 1972 to 5.9 % in 2021 growing at an average annual rate of 1.36%.

According to Hiday (1978), now a days it's very sensitive issue to care elder peoples in the society due to migration, tied schedule, nuclear family and etc. that's why most of the elders' parents they should live separate from their children's. There is also a rising trend for families to swap their elderly care duties in favor of these costly old age homes. These facilities have seen growth in great leaps and bounds over the last decade. This research is about investigating these observables, perhaps anecdotal, realities and finding out if there is any semblance of truth on the ground (Aryal, 2022).

The aim of the study is to explore the concept of elderly care in Nepalese society and its changing meaning in the modern times. According to Thapa and Kattel (2019), it is known to all that the traditional way has always been that grown up children take care of their elderly parents, the same way the latter took care of their young ones. A manifestation of a beautiful circle of life. One could find innumerable references of an ideal offspring, the one who devotes his/her life in service of the parents (Speck, 2017). They are everywhere; from religious scriptures, to folklore, in almost every artistic expression as well as in common vernacular. Hence, it is considered not only a moral endeavor but also a righteous duty.

But the turn of the century and the significant increase in the pace of life affected many aspects of Nepalese living, even the case of elderly care and the possibility of seeking outside assistance in accomplishing it. More recently, the rising number of private as well as public care home facilities somewhat support belief. Gone are the days when such issues were a reality of the far away land. Society seems to slowly register the depth and width of this issue (Rai & Dangal, 2021).

It was important to properly address the issue at hand and see how and why it has proliferated in recent times. What has really changed and what is causing the growth of care homes as an integral part of our overall healthcare system.

The study stems from the changing social fabric of Nepal. This has been more visible in the urban areas comparatively but rural Nepal also faces similar challenges from some of the burning issues of the last decade. For instance, Gautam (2008), first among the issues tackles the issue of mass immigration the country has faced that transcends the socio-economic demographic. There is a huge exodus of young working age men and women of all backgrounds for foreign employment and for other better opportunities. Secondly, the family structure has also taken a different turn with the emergence of nuclear families away from traditional joint families. The third and perhaps the more important issue of ageing which equates with growing health related issues among the elderly. There could be many more underlying issues that could have contributed towards the sprawl in care homes especially in the urban areas such as Kathmandu, Pokhara and others.

Literature review

In Nepal, as in many other countries, the traditional practice was for the elderly to be cared for within the family. However, various factors have contributed to the emergence of old age homes in Nepal in recent years. These factors include changing family structures, urbanization, migration, and socio-economic transformations (Chalise et al., 2022).

In the modern world, population ageing affects both industrialized and developing nations, and it is a severe problem in both groups. Health and other social policy areas are affected by population aging getting older does not always imply that our latter years will be better or have a higher quality of life (Chalise & Brightman, 2006). The Nepalese government established social security for the elderly in 1995–1996; nonetheless, there were surprisingly few research that specifically addressed this topic. According to Chalise and Brightman (2006) a recent survey, senior Nepalis are not particularly pleased with the current government policy of giving them cash because it is insufficient for the old who are poor.

Even so, the majority of elderly people live in joint families. According to Mishra and Chalise (2019), over 80% of elderly people in Nepal live with their children. Similar to other Asian nations, Nepal's government has little obligation to provide care for the elderly. Instead, it is the responsibility of the elderly's own children to ensure their welfare. However, due to socioeconomic changes, population aging, and child out migration, Nepal is becoming a problem that requires attention before it disintegrates that society (Speck, 2017). All of these factors may have recently contributed to an increase in the number of elderly people residing in old age homes. These factors may be support to increase the trend of old age home.

Changing Family Structures: Traditional family structures in Nepal, which emphasized multi-generational households, are undergoing changes. Younger generations are increasingly migrating to cities or abroad for education or employment, leaving behind aging parents and elderly relatives (Freedman, 1996).

Urbanization and Migration: Rapid urbanization in Nepal has resulted in increased job opportunities and a shift in lifestyles. Younger generations often migrate to urban areas in search of employment, leaving their aging parents in rural areas. This separation can make it challenging for families to provide care for elderly family members (Dubey et al., 2011).

Socio-economic Transformations: According to economic factors also play a role in the emergence of old age homes. As Nepal undergoes economic development, there are shifts in societal values and norms. The increased cost of living, changing cultural dynamics, and individualistic values can influence families' ability or willingness to provide care for their elderly members.

Luck et al. (2009), Old age, often referred to as elderly age or senior age, describes the later phases of a person's life after they reach an advanced age. Although the precise meaning of "old age" varies, it generally refers to a stage of life during which people go through the physical, cognitive, and social changes that come with aging.

Physical Changes: As people get older, their physical capacities normally gradually deteriorate. Reduced strength, flexibility, and mobility can be a result of this. Typical physical changes associated with aging also include modifications to sensory abilities like vision, hearing, and taste (Chalise et al., 2022).

Cognitive Changes: Some cognitive functions, such as processing speed, working memory, and some aspects of attention, tend to deteriorate with age (Singh & Shrestha, 2016). However, additional mental abilities such as Other cognitive abilities, including collected knowledge and wisdom, may, however, hold steady or even advance. It is crucial to remember that these alterations can differ substantially amongst people.

Health Concerns: Aging frequently increases the risk of a number of illnesses. Chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis, and cognitive loss, including types of dementia like Alzheimer's disease, are common health problems in old age. However, a lot of elderly people enjoy healthy, fulfilling lives (Shrestha, 2012).

Social and Emotional Changes: Older persons may go through social and emotional changes in their lives. They might retire from their jobs, lose loved ones, or run into difficulties when their roles and responsibilities change. However, many older folks also benefit from having more free time for hobbies, excursions, and time spent with family and friends (Gautam, 2005).

Positives: Van Velsen (1960), aging might be difficult, there are certain advantages to this period of life. Many senior citizens claim to have more wisdom, contentment, and self-acceptance. They might have more time to pursue hobbies and participate in worthwhile activities, which would increase their sense of contentment.

Care and assistance: As people age, they could need more care and assistance. This can include treating chronic health concerns as well as help with daily tasks like bathing and dressing. To fulfill the needs of older persons, families, communities, and healthcare systems frequently offer resources and services (Khanal & Chalise, 2020).

An old age home, also known as a retirement home or senior living facility, is a residential institution designed to provide housing, care, and support services for older adults who may not have family members available to care for them or who choose to live independently in a community of their peers. Chalise and Brightman (2006), old age homes typically cater to individuals in the later stages of life who require varying degrees of assistance with daily activities and healthcare needs.

It is important to note that old age homes can vary in terms of their size, services offered, cost, and overall approach to care. Some facilities focus on providing independent living options for active seniors, while others specialize in providing higher levels of care for individuals with specific health conditions or disabilities (Chalise, 2021).

Old age homes can offer a sense of community, companionship, and specialized care for older adults who may have limited support from their families or who prefer to live in a structured environment. However, it's essential to consider individual preferences, cultural norms, and family dynamics when making decisions regarding elderly care options.

When considering an old age home, it is advisable to visit potential facilities, review their services, speak with staff and residents, and assess the overall environment and quality of care provided.

Methodology

During the research, several old age homes exclusively privately owned, were selected and visited in the areas around Lalitpur and some other locations in Kathmandu. A cross sectional study was conducted mainly focusing on these facilities within the Kathmandu valley. A descriptive and explanatory research design has been used whilst collecting the data which included:

- Field visit
- Structured interviews with care home authorities
- Direct survey questionnaire with the residents
- Literature review from published articles on the subject matter
- Government data available in the public domain (secondary data)

Mixed approach (both quantitative and qualitative) has been utilized in order to give the research topic a wider scope and a much more nuanced perspective to reflect the changing social fabric of the country. It was decided that compiling varied opinions contributed from both the residents as well as the consummate professionals who operate these facilities would deliver a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Information and Data management

A non-probabilistic purposive sampling method was followed for selecting the respondents. 18 elders were chosen as a sample from three old age homes in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. The primary data was collected with the aid of a questionnaire to be completed by the respondents which was mainly composed of three parts. For instance, the survey sought specific information about the respondents, their

families and the circumstances that led them to the current facility.

Three variables were considered for this study and a separate set of questions were attributed to each of the variables. There are altogether 18 questions in the questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

Three field visits were conducted in the process of collecting primary data. This included booking an appointment with the care home managers and having a structured interview with them. Also, there were a few survey questions completed during the course of the conversation with the residents. Due to the circumstantial challenges faced for having to deal with the elderly who were often not in a position to respond properly, other methods were adopted such as talking to the nurses and caregivers, observation of their process of giving care and the premises of the care home as a whole.

Results

This study is based on questionnaire-based survey, which was carried out through 18 elderlies who are living in private old age home in Kathmandu valley. All the data were collected from three old age home through primary data by structure interview.

Table 1

Demographic profile of respondents

Gender	n	%	Marital status	n	%
Male	8	44.4	Unmarried	1	5.6
Female	10	55.6	Married	11	61.1
Total	18	100	Widow	6	33.3
			Total	18	100
Age	n	%	Past occupation	n	%
Below 60	2	11.1	Trade/Business	7	38.9
61-69	7	38.9	Farming/ Household	2	11.1
70-89	8	44.4	Gov Job	4	22.2
Above 90	1	5.6	Others	5	27.8
Total	18	100	Total	18	100

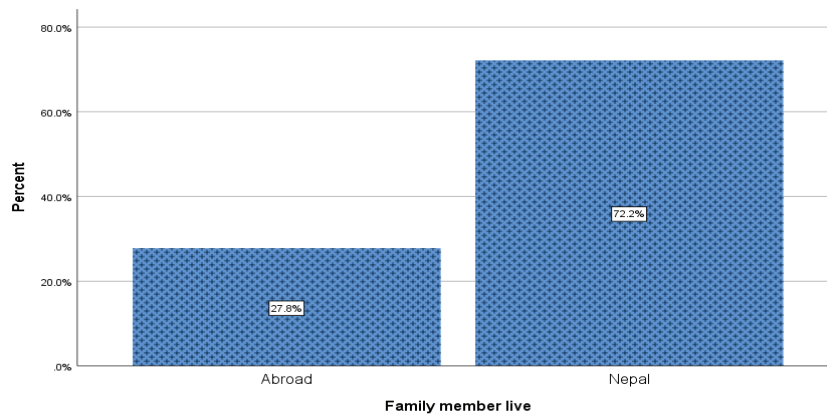
The data indicates involvement of below 60 years to above 90 years, male respondents 44.4% and 55.6% women respondents. Most of the respondents 94% were married and 6% unmarried. All of the respondents had different occupation and most of the respondents 39% were belongs to trade and business and only 11% from household.

Table 2

Family member status

Family member live	n	%
Abroad	5	27.8
Nepal	13	72.2
Total	18	100

From the table 2, most of the respondents who are living in old age home they are belongs to family, who were affluent and living in Kathmandu. More than 72% respondents' families are living in Nepal near their old age home Kathmandu and rest of the respondents 28% families are live in abroad.



Form the figure 1 shows that recently increasing trend of old age home in Nepal not only due to abroad migration whereas most of the respondents 72% families are living in Nepal.

Table 3

Previous living status

Stay before	n	%
Daughter's family	2	11.1
Son's family	16	88.9
Total	18	100

Form the table more than 89% respondents they were from the Joint family. Still, most of the parents when they are aged, want to live with their children. But now a days children they do not interested to live with their parents.

Figure 2

Previous living status

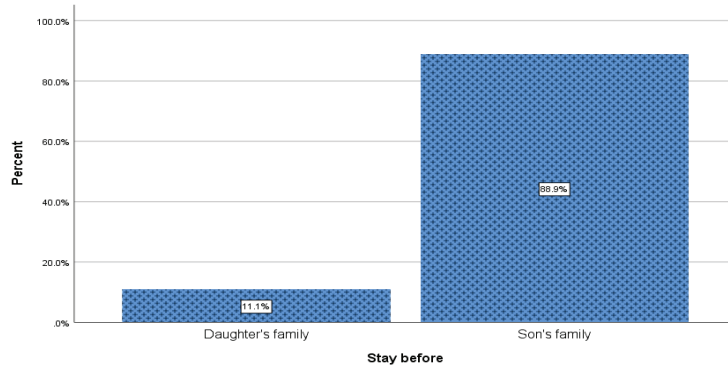


Table 4

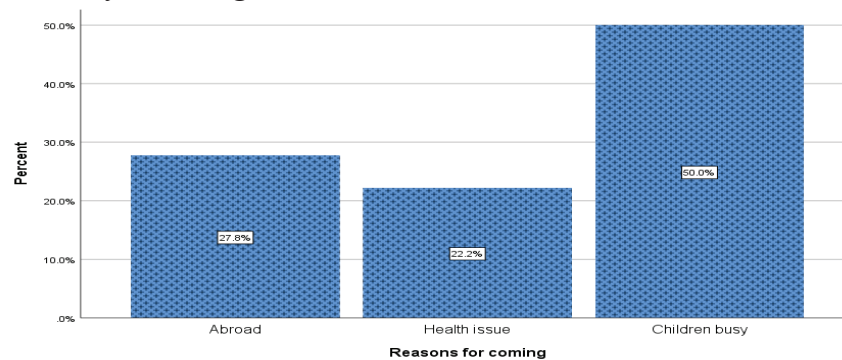
Reasons for coming

Reasons for coming	n	%
Abroad	5	28
Health issue	4	22
Children busy	9	50
Total	18	100

Form the table shows that why the respondents were leaved their home or what's the reasons for coming in old age home. More than 50% respondents were come due to busy schedule of their children. Near about 28% respondents they have different health issue and 22% respondent's family's member were abroad so they were not properly cared from their children due to busy schedule that is cause their families choosing this arrangement.

Figure 3

Reasons for coming



Discussion

The majority of the family members were affluent and living in Kathmandu. A substantial percentage, although not a majority of cases anymore, of the elderly living in these facilities, had their family members settled abroad. Most residents have a good amicable relationship with their families. They are in constant touch and their family members visit the residents on a regular basis. Even if they were abroad, they would constantly keep in touch via video calls. However, there were a few unfortunate cases where the family members didn't get along and some had even turned violent in the past. On a positive note, there is a changing attitude towards the elderly using old-age home facilities in recent times. It is considered morally acceptable to give them care in this manner as opposed to keeping them at home with no one to look after them. Having said that, there is still a long way to go before this arrangement gains mainstream acceptability. Many still haven't been able to come to terms with this in order to be a normal practice in this society. Certain communities still see this more through the lens of social approval. "What would people think of us?" is a burning question. One sticking point is that the health condition of the elderly seems to be the core because of their families choosing this arrangement. Bottom line, Nepalese society is changing and slowly this will likely be more prevalent around us and no longer just practiced by westerners.

Conclusion

Relocation to an old age home is becoming increasingly widespread, probably reflecting the growing mobility of Western nations. Although most elders prefer to remain in familiar settings and consider home adaptations and remodeling as well as new technologies to avoid involuntary relocation, voluntary relocation, including seasonal migration and relocation to forms of assisted living (e.g., CCRCs), is becoming an increasingly common event—and is likely to become even more so among future cohorts of elders (Oswald & Rowles, 2006).

There is a shift in the Nepalese mindset on such a sensitive issue of elderly care that may take a while to catch up with the urban-rural divide. However, the future looks hopeful for this new way of thinking to become more mainstream and that society will be generous enough to view it with the compassion and sensitivity that it deserves. Away from some of the baggage tradition and culture may bring tackling this issue.

Alternative aged living and care arrangements are desperately needed in Nepal, because the current facilities are inadequate. However, the terrible image of nursing homes that the media has constructed is false. According to the report, older folks and close family are grateful for fresh possibilities. The rise in the number of such organizations reflects a shift in attitudes toward intergenerational relationships and aging assistance choices outside of the conventional extended family (Speck & Müller-Böker, 2021). All the signs suggest that elderly care is going to be more relevant with

every passing day. Longer life expectancy, hectic modern lifestyle, and many other reasons may contribute to the topic in question. A larger conversation is required on this issue for a more reasonable solution, which at one time or another, will affect us all.

Nepal is still suffering from extensive poverty, diseases that are increasing both communicable and non-communicable, insufficient health care facilities, unplanned and low economy. As a result, the country is less prepared to deal with the effects of its rapidly growing elderly population. The government should make a plan to care elders.

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