

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORK AND ITS
IMPLICATION ON THE HEALTH NEEDS OF ELDERLY
IN UDUPI DISTRICT.**

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Abstract

The social network plays a significant role in enhancing physical and mental health of the elderly. The objective of the present study was to assess the role of social network and its implication on health needs of elderly in Udupi district. The data of the study was drawn from Udupi district through random sampling method. The findings of the study indicate that social network will have a positive impact on health of the elderly. Health of the elderly and social network are significantly correlated

Key Words

Elderly,

Social Network,

Health Needs

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1. Introduction

Ageing is a natural process, which presents a unique challenge for all sections of the society. Although the exact definition of elderly age group is controversial, with gradual improvement in health-care delivery services, life expectancy has increased and thus the percentage of the elderly population is also on increase

Need of Social Network among the Elderly

Mitchell (1997) defines social network as a specific set of linkages among a defined set of persons with the additional property of impact on the social behavior. In other words social network is viewed as person-centered links which varies in structure (size and density); in nature of the linkages(frequency and reciprocity) and its functions which it provides (support, and services) . The benefits of Social networks differs from stage to stage of life span

Social Networks and Health

Social networks affect health through a variety of mechanisms, including (a) the provision of social support (both perceived and actual), (b) social influence (e.g., norms, social control), (c) social engagement, (d) person- to-person contacts (e.g., pathogen exposure, secondhand cigarette smoke), and (e) access to resources (e.g., money, jobs, information) (Berkman & Glass, 2000). Some initial work has even begun to specify biological mechanisms by which social support flowing through a social network tie might affect morbidity and mortality

Researchers have found that positive social interactions protect against developing difficulties with physical functions in later life (Mavandadi, Rook& Newsom, 2007). Numerous studies have shown that being a part of an extensive social network has a protective effect on health (Giummarra et al., 2004; Bath &Deeg, 2005; Bath & Gardiner, 2005; Mavandadi, Rook & Newsom, 2007; Miller-Martinez& Wallace, 2007). A UK based study of older people's social engagement and health, and their use of community care and medication, found that those who were more socially engaged were less likely to have seen their family doctor or district nurse in the month prior to the study (Bath & Gardiner, 2005). Another study (Zunzunegui et al., 2005) of the association between the ability to undertake activities of daily living (ADLs), disability and

social ties among people over 65 in three European countries, found that social ties can help to maintain ADL abilities in old age and even to restore them after injury or trauma..

Litreature Review

Lubben, James E. (1988) in the article on “Assessing social networks among elderly populations” s reports that social network influences health directly. Further, the article explains how social network construct has social support, informal support, and social connectedness. It presents a new scale for measuring the social network among the elderly population, and examines the relationship of the social network with three distinct types of health indicators, subsequent hospital use, life satisfaction, and presents a checklist for health related behaviour. These scales help to measure the social network and its influence on health among the elderly population. Active participation in social activity decreases the risk of institutionalization and increases the health status among the elderly, while meeting relatives and talking to friends decreases mortality and enhances health, according to Ulrike Steinbach(1991) in the study, Social Networks, Institutionalization, and Mortality Among Elderly People in the United States.. Diana Shye et al. (1995) in the study “Relationship between social network support and mortality” find that social network has a direct protective effect on mortality risk for both men and women. The study observed that men gain protection from lower level network size than women. This study suggests that there should be gender specific approach, while measuring the network sizes for men and women.

2. Research Method

Aim of the Study is to study the Impact of Social Network on Health Needs of Elderly in Udupi District

Objectives Of The Study

To understand the social network of elderly people in Udupi

To study the impact of social network on the health needs of elderly

Sampling Procedure

Simple random sampling method under probability sampling is used for the study .A list of all the households with the elderly population was acquired from the Corporation office and their names, their house numbers and were written down on a piece of paper. The lottery method was used to select the sample. And the names that came up in the lottery method is included in the study. A sample of 200 was selected based on the statistical formula.

Data Collection

The data was collected using the Interview method. The Researcher visited all the houses of the respondents took their consent and conducted the interview. Data collection process took approximately 8 months

Table and Results

Table 1Age wise Distribution of Respondents Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
60-70	107	53.5
70-80	63	31.5
80-90	22	11.0
>90	8	4.0
Sex		
Male	79	39.5
Female	121	60.5
Education Qualification		
No Schooling	79	39.5
Lower Primary	63	31.5
Higher Primary	18	9.0
High School	22	11.0
Diploma	2	1.0
PUC	5	2.5
Degree	9	4.5
Post Graduation	2	1.0

The above Tables show that the majority of the respondents were between the age group of 60 to 80 years (85%) . With regard to their educational background, a large majority of them range from no education (39.5%) to lower primary level (31.5%). Both these factors are significant in relation to their social network and a majority of 60.5% are females

Table 2 Social network of Elderly People

Social Network of Elderly People In Udupi District				Percentage		
	Yes	No	Total	yes	No	Total
Going outside to meet people	160	40	200	80%	20%	100%
Meeting Friends	150	50	200	75%	25%	100%
Participating in Religious Ceremonies	178	22	200	89%	11%	100%
Participation in Social Gathering	150	50	200	75%	25%	100%
Attending Group Meetings	100	100	200	50%	50%	100%

From the above Table it is clear that majority of the respondents are having positive social network. Nearly 80% of the respondents report that they go outside to meet the people, 75% respondents do meet their friends, 89% respondents participate in religious ceremonies, 75% respondent's social gathering and 50% respondents stated that they attend group meeting. So it is clear that majority of the elderly respondents do have a strong social network with whom they are connected to

Table 3 Health in Correlation with Sex

Health	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Excellent Count	4 5.1%	17 14.0%	21 10.5%
Good Count	58 73.4%	83 68.6%	141 70.5%
Fair Count	17 21.5%	21 17.4%	38 19.0%
Total	79	121	200

$\chi^2=4.274$ $p=0.118$ ns

the above Table demonstrates the correlation between Health and Sex 21 (10.5%) respondents(4(5.1%) males and 17(14.0%) females) responded that their health is excellent wheeas 141 (70.5%) respondents(58(73.4%) males and 83(68.6%) Females) responded that their health is good and 38(19.0%) respondents (17(21.5%) males and 21(17.4%) Females) responded that their health is fair

Table 4Health in correlation with Social Network

Health of the elderly		Social Network			Total
		Excellent	Good	Fair	
Health	Excellent Count	9 9.9%	8 9.8%	4 14.8%	21 10.5%
	Good Count	65 71.4%	57 69.5%	19 70.4%	141 70.5%
	Fair Count	17 18.7%	17 20.7%	4 14.8%	38 19.0%
Total Count		91 100.0%	82 100.0%	27 100.0%	200 100.0%
P=0.916 ns					

The above Table highlights the association between social network and Health of the respondents 71.4% of the respondents who have the excellent social network, experience good health and similarly 69.5% of the respondents who have good social network also experience good health. However P value of 0.916 shows that the test results are not significant highlightes that there is no association between social network and health .This could be due to the fact that health issues are a part of the aging process irrespective of their social life

3. Discussion

Health plays a vital role in the life of an individual. As one grows old, health becomes an important aspect of life, and one cannot be denied of health benefits. Social network plays an important role in enhancing health among the elderly. Numerous studies have proved that social network help the elderly to keep fit. The World Health Organization clearly defines that health is

complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely an absence of disease. Complete well-being is only possible when one has good social network. The purpose of this paper is to see the impact of social network on health needs of the elderly in Udupi District. The data here clearly shows that social network will positively create a great impact on health of the elderly or in other words one can say that social network keep elderly people fit and active.

The present study and the results will have lots of implication to social work practice. Social workers can involve elderly people and help them to strengthen their social network and create awareness on how a positive interaction and meaningful participation will help them to keep healthy and active. the awareness has to generated among elderly people to have regular interaction and active participation in societal affairs and activities

4. Conclusion

The study gives a clear picture on how social network will enhance health of the elderly.as one age health becomes important but some time apart from strong medication one cannot control health dude to psychological and social aspects. through the study one can understand how social network will have positive impact on elderly life.

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