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Concept of Solo Ageing is gaining momentum in India – Agewell Foundation

Today, most people face isolation and loneliness due to self-centered lifestyles and ever widening gap between generations. Older people are the worst affected section of society, who are suffering a lot due to loneliness. Most of them face loneliness/isolation even within their families. Due to fast changing socio-economic, cultural and demographic scenarios, the concept of Solo Ageing is gaining momentum in society.

To coincide with the **International Day of Older Persons, 1st October 2024**, Agewell Foundation has carried out a study on this burning issue. For **“Study on Solo Aging with Special Focus on the Status of Older People living alone”** survey was conducted among 10,000 older persons with support from Agewell volunteers spread across the country during September 2024.

Major findings and recommendations of the study are as under-

- **During the study, 14.3% of elderly respondents** (13.4% in rural areas and 15% in urban areas) **were found living alone**
- Among all elderly respondents, who were living alone, 41.9% (46.5% of elderly women) reportedly said that they have been living alone for more than 5 years
- 46.9% of elderly respondents (living alone) were found happy with their life while 41.5% of elderly respondents claimed that they were not happy with their life
- **Over 31% of elderly respondents claimed that people prefer to live alone in old age for independence (financially/socially)**
- **26.7% of respondents said that they have to live alone due to fast-changing socio-economic scenarios i.e. migration of younger generations, the popularity of nuclear families, etc.**
- **21.5% of elderly respondents, older persons go for solo aging for the sake of privacy/personal space in old age.**
- **Approx. 57% of elderly respondents claimed that financial independence is very significant/significant for them**
- 10.4% of respondents admitted that they always feel lonely while 21.2% of elderly respondents claimed that they often feel lonely and most of the elderly respondents i.e. 35.2% accepted that they feel loneliness sometimes.
- Almost every 10th elderly, who are living with other family members, face isolation within the family almost daily.
- 40.8% of elderly respondents (living alone) accepted that living alone in old age has affected their mental health negatively and approximately, 31.7% claimed that living alone in old age has affected their mental health positively.
- **Approx. 79.4% of old people value the role of emotions in old age. 23.2% of respondents said that emotions have an extremely important place in life**
- 28.6% of elderly respondents admitted that the attitude of younger people towards their elderly members is positive or very positive.
- **More than half (57%) of elderly respondents reportedly accepted that the perception of solo aging is becoming more common in society.**
- More than half of respondents i.e. 51.3% of elderly respondents claimed that the concept of solo ageing impacted society negatively.
- 28.5% of elderly respondents reportedly admitted that solo ageing has a positive impact on society.
- **According to 35.6% of respondents, older persons who live alone are affected adversely due to loneliness.**
- 41.3% admitted that they rarely participate in community activities.
- More than 23.6% of them were not using digital technology (smartphone/computer, etc.)
- 76.4% of elderly respondents claimed that they use technology in their day-to-day lives

Further, study on Older Persons Living Alone in Old Age also indicates that -

- 39% of respondents (541 respondents out of 1434 elderly respondents), maintaining physical health is the biggest challenge for them.
- Almost 1/4th of elderly respondents admitted that the role of the mind in solo ageing is very important.
- According to 35.6% of old people, who were living alone admitted that the most important advantage of living alone is Enjoying Privacy.
- Most of the respondents (57.3%) agreed that they feel more independent living alone.
- Almost 1/3rd of respondents living alone (32.5%) said that loneliness is the most significant disadvantage of living alone in old age.
- Lack of family support is the most significant disadvantage of Solo Ageing as per the 1/4 respondents

On the occasion, **Himanshu Rath, Founder Chairman of Agewell Foundation** said, *“To address the ever-growing challenges related to Solo Ageing, loneliness and isolation in old age, and even alienation and marginalization of older people, concerned stakeholders, including family/community members, policy/opinion leaders, government, and other stakeholders at all levels, need to acknowledge and understand the ground realities. Since loneliness and isolation is very painful and disturbing in old age, there is an urgent need to sensitize younger family members towards the needs of elderly family members and encourage intergenerational interaction so that both generations can prepare for a better tomorrow.”*

Based on observations and study findings following are some recommendations;

- Develop programs to address the emotional well-being of older persons
- Enhance healthcare services tailored to older persons, particularly those living alone,
- Create gainful engagement and occupational activities for older persons
- Advocate for laws that ensure elder protection and financial security
- Create networks of volunteers and professional caregivers for people living alone
- Utilize technology to enhance the quality of life in old age
- Create and improve elderly-friendly transportation infrastructure to access healthcare
- Conduct sensitization programs at school levels to sensitize younger students towards their elderly family members
- Encourage participation of older persons in mainstream activities

For more info, please contact : agewellfoundation@gmail.com , +91 9810030979

Agewell Foundation

www.agewellfoundation.org



M-8A, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi-110024, India

Phone.: +91 1129836486, 29840484, 29830005



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