

Social Exclusion of Elderly Kourkouta Lamprini

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Introduction

Social exclusion is a phenomenon linked to the concept of exclusion from work, racism and discrimination. The common features of exclusion statements are mainly the lack of possibility of the helpless individual to exercise his rights because of the access restrictions that exist in areas such as education, training, employment, housing, medical care [1].

This exclusion reduces their opportunities to productively contribute to society, which gradually leads them to poverty. The enormous financial and emotional stress of these individuals not only leads them to problematic personal, family and interpersonal relationships but also to social isolation situations [2].

As vulnerable social groups are characterized the populations of which is prevented a full participation in economic, social, and political life of their living place or their access to education, labour market, income and to other resources [3].

Among the social groups considered vulnerable are also the elderly.

This study highlights the factors that contribute to the social exclusion of elderly people in order to be recognized and resolved in time.

Talking About Social Exclusion of Elderly

Nowadays, criterion to characterize someone as elderly besides the chronological age which is the "official" age there are other ages such as social age and psychological age. The social age refers on behaviour and the psychological age refers on feelings. However, the only stable and measurable age is the chronological age which is reported to the real life time.

On elderly the result of the social structures changes in general in all societies is that they feel socially alienated, because they are forced to spend the rest of their lives in institutions, accompanied by loneliness or isolation, factors that contribute to their physical and mental deterioration [4, 5].

Other elements are the economic situation of the elderly, their educational level and possibly the loss of one of the two spouses. These features make high-risk problems for the elderly and should be identified, assessed and treated [6].

Apart from the problems the elderly faces they also have simple needs such as [7]:

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- Sufficient and nourishing food, proper clothing and footwear, cleanness and decent housing and home help, therefore income that can cover their basic needs
- Abidance at home with companion, human relationships, love, affection, integration into the family without the feeling that they are burden to others
- Satisfactory medical coverage and hospital care that respect their personality
- Activity, employment, education, communication, promotion and recognition of the offer, social interaction, fun and new interests
- Ability to move independent in their place and help them move when they need with different devices like: cane, crutch or wheelchair
- Access to services in the community or home care and hospitalization

The economic situation of the elderly person determines to a degree his position. Until a few years ago the retirement of the elderly gave them independence at least from their family members. But various groups of elderly, whose pension is not enough, live in poverty and face serious survival problems and consequently their integration into society [8].

In addition, a common problem is the economic exploitation of the elderly which is the illegal use of funds or property of an elderly without his/her authorization. Elder financial abuse is a growing threat to our nation's older adults. Research suggests

that at least 20 percent of adults age 65 and over have been victimized by financial fraud and abuse [9].

Also the intense psychological problems which may be faced by the elderly, have as a starting point their isolation due to health problems and indifference faced from the members of their family, but also from the social environment towards the elderly. This leads the elderly person to be more distant from his family, friends, work [10, 11].

The family continues to play an important role in the care of elderly people. Caring for an elderly usually requires tremendous physical and mental effort from the person who takes care of him. It is difficult for people to take care of the elderly. The requirements, as well as the needs of elder persons can create situations, in which abuse is more likely to happen [12, 13]. But the problems are rising and because of modern way of living where the family feels pressed, often occurs disturbance in relations of the family members and the tensions that are created leads to violent acts against their elderly parents [12, 14].

The recognition of abuse is difficult in some cases (e.g. physical abuse, violence), however, the situation is complicated when there are no immediate and visible effect on the life of the victim. Also very common and in increasing are the emotional/psychological abuse of the elderly, which may have determinative and harmful consequences in the elderly. Moreover, their victims may not be physically or mentally capable or they may be even isolated, afraid or embarrassed to inform what is happening to them [15, 16].

The residence is also one of the major problems faced by the elderly both in towns and villages. In rural areas the elderly live in homes that do not provide them modern facilities, the living conditions are inadequate and sometimes dangerous. In urban areas the elderly person lives trapped and isolated inside the apartment, without communication with their neighbours [17, 18].

Moreover, the elderly health problems are related to the fact that they suffer from many diseases and usually require a long time to recover. The elderly often uses hospital services and due to the various illnesses who need medical care very often. These associated with some senile disability result in the marginalization

of the elderly [19]. Often, self-neglect among the elderly is a growing problem that commonly goes unreported, according to a new survey of elder care experts [20].

All these result that older person will find it difficult to integrate and adapt to the modern lifestyle and consequently to suffer social exclusion and inability to cope with the modern requirements. This creates the view that now he is useless and should be withdrawn [21].

So when there is no understanding of the skills, offers, values, needs and problems of elderly then there is a difficulty of the individual functionality within the social reality [11, 22].

Conclusion

The society by facing biased older people is losing a very important group and its capacity. On the other hand, elderly people are excluded from social conditions and are experiencing situations such as alienation, loneliness-isolation [23, 24]. Furthermore, with rapid retirement and removal of the elderly from the production process takes place the impoverishment of older people, and their social exclusion. Many elderly people are isolated because of loss of physical or mental capacity, or through the loss of friends and family members [23, 25].

Therefore, the lack of daily necessities care, the poor state of health and the lack of communication with their relatives generate negative feelings of rejection and loneliness in elderly people.

Once it is suspected, social exclusion of elderly, should be reported to adult protective services. Referral to social services and Adult Protective Services are also vital to decrease morbidity and mortality and to further guide elder care [25, 26]. Therapists can assist vulnerable elderly persons to resolve tension, cope with trauma, assess available resources, and make plans for safety.

Finally, the reduction of the phenomenon of elder social exclusion needs a lot of effort and understanding by each and every person but especially by those ones who are directly connected with this situation such as the elderly themselves as well as their close environment.

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