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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFICACY OF RELAXATION THERAPY IN REDUCING PERCEIVED STRESS AMONG ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN SELECTED OLD AGE HOMES, BENGALURU

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ABSTRACT

Background: This research paper investigates the effectiveness of relaxation therapy in reducing perceived stress among the elderly population residing at selected old age homes in Bengaluru. In this study, a pretest-posttest experimental design is employed to assess the impact of relaxation therapy on their perceived stress levels. **Materials and Methods:** A single-group pretest-posttest design as a type of quasi-experimental study was conducted on 30 elderly living at old age home in Bengaluru. The research instruments included the Perceived Stress Scale. **Results:** After the intervention, the Mean (Standard Deviation) of stress were 8.2 (4.85). The mean score of stress among the elderly after the intervention was significantly lower compared to the before intervention ($t = 2.02, p < 0.05$). **Conclusions:** The findings of this study contribute to understanding the efficacy of relaxation therapy as a potential intervention for managing stress among the elderly population, thereby enhancing their psychological well-being and quality of life.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is a complex biological process influenced by genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors. It's a normal part of life and different people may experience it differently. Leading a healthy lifestyle with a balanced diet, exercise, and regular medical check-ups can help to promote healthy aging.¹ The elderly population faces various challenges, including declining physical health, social isolation, and psychological distress. Changes in hormone production like menopause in women and decreased testosterone in men. Old age homes have emerged as a prevalent living arrangement for elderly individuals facing challenges associated with aging, declining health, and limited social support. The transition to an environment and the presence of various stressors can significantly impact the well-being of these individuals.² Perceived stress is a significant issue affecting the well-being of the elderly, leading to adverse health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and decreased quality of life.³⁻⁶ Old age homes often serve as residences for elderly individuals who may lack familial support or face difficulties in coping with daily stressors.

Hence, it is imperative to explore effective interventions to alleviate stress and enhance the psychological well-being of this vulnerable population.⁴ Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of relaxation therapy in reducing stress and promoting relaxation among different age groups. However, there is a paucity of studies specifically focusing on the elderly population residing in old age homes. Studies have shown that relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness meditation can effectively reduce perceived stress levels among older adults.^{7,11}

Objectives: To assess the perceived stress levels among the elderly population residing at selected old age homes in Bengaluru. To evaluate the effectiveness of relaxation therapy in reducing perceived stress among the elderly population residing at selected old age homes in Bengaluru.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a pretest-posttest experimental design to assess the effectiveness of relaxation therapy in reducing perceived stress among the elderly population.

The participants were selected from various old age homes in Bangalore using purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria include individuals aged 60 years and above who are willing to participate in the study. The intervention involves implementing relaxation therapy sessions conducted by the investigators. The sessions included various relaxation techniques tailored to the needs of the elderly population, such as progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness meditation⁸⁻¹¹ for a period of two hours for seven days in a structured way. The stress levels were assessed using Perceived Stress Scale administered before and after the intervention. The tools included Section- A: demographic questionnaire & Section-B: Perceived Stress Scale. Elderly at selected old age home, who fulfilled the inclusion criteria were included in the study. The investigators explained the purpose and method of the study to the participants in the vernacular language. The investigators were specially trained to render relaxation therapy for the study subjects. To implement the intervention, at first, an individual training session was held for each subject in their room. During the training session, sufficient explanations were given to the samples about the relaxation therapy.

The relaxation therapy was administered for 7 days continuously, with a fixed duration (60 min), individually, by the elderly with the supervision of the responsible investigator for the intervention. The educational content, intervention method, frequency, and duration of the intervention sessions were the same for all samples. The frequency and duration of intervention were monitored using a stopwatch and finger counting. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software version 25 (IBM, Chicago, USA), descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), and inferential statistics. The paired *t*-test was used to compare the level of anxiety and happiness before and after the intervention. The significance level was considered at 0.05.

RESULTS

Majority of the subjects were 71-80 years old 20(66.7), male 16(53.3), Hindu religion 26(86.7), Primary education 10(33.3), married 19(63.3). staying in old age home < 3 years 28(93.3), communicating once in a month with family members 15(50) (Table-1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the elderly at selected old age homes

S. No	DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE	AGE	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	Age in years	50-60	9	30
		61-70	1	3.3
		71-80	20	66.7
2	Gender	Male	16	53.3
		Female	14	46.7
		Others	0	0
3	Religion	Hindu	26	86.7
		Muslim	2	6.7
		Christian	2	6.7
		Others	0	0
4	Education	Illiterate	7	23.3
		Primary education	10	33.3
		Secondary education	7	23.3
		Graduation	6	20
		Post- graduation	0	0
		Others	0	0
5	Occupation before institutionalization	Employed	9	30
		Unemployed	10	33.3
		Others	11	36.7
6	Marital status	Married	19	63.3
		Unmarried	6	20
		Widow/Widower	5	16.7
		Separated	0	0
7	Length of stay in old age home	<3years	28	93.3
		3 years	0	0
		>3years	2	6.7
8	How often do you communicate with family members	Regular	3	10
		Once in a week	8	26.7
		Once in a month	15	50
		Never	4	13.3

Table 1. Levels and mean scores of stress in elderly before and after the relaxation therapy

Variable	Before intervention (n=30)		After intervention (n=30)		t
	n (%)	Mean (SD)	n (%)	Mean (SD)	
Low stress	14.00(46.70)	15.23 (6.52)	26(86.70)	8.2 (4.85)	2.02**
Moderate stress	14.00(46.70)		4(13.30)		
High perceived stress	2.00(6.60)		0(0)		

**Significant at 0.05 level

Baseline stress levels of elderly were as follows: 14 (46.7) were having low stress, 14 (46.7) were having moderate stress and 2 (6.6) were having high perceived stress, the total Mean score was 15.23 and Standard Deviation of stress in subjects was 6.52. After the relaxation therapy, the mean score was 8.2 and standard deviation was 4.85. Relaxation therapy caused a statistically significant difference in the stress mean score of subjects after the intervention. The mean scores of stress in elderly were reduced significantly after the intervention, $t=2.02$ ($p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the effect of the relaxation therapy on the stress of elderly residing at old age homes. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of relaxation therapy in reducing stress levels among elderly individuals.

The significant reduction in perceived stress observed among participants receiving relaxation therapy underscores the potential benefits of incorporating such interventions into the care regimen for elderly individuals in old age homes.¹¹ By providing a non-pharmacological approach to stress management, relaxation therapy offers a holistic means of promoting well-being and enhancing the quality of life for the elderly population. Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of addressing the psychosocial needs of elderly individuals, particularly those residing in institutional settings, where they may be more susceptible to stressors such as social isolation and loss of autonomy.⁸ Future research could explore the long-term effects of relaxation therapy on various health outcomes among the elderly population and investigate potential mechanisms underlying its effectiveness. Additionally, efforts should be made to integrate relaxation therapy into standard care protocols within old age homes and train staff members in its delivery to ensure sustainability and accessibility of this intervention.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of relaxation therapy in reducing perceived stress among elderly individuals residing at selected old age homes in Bangalore. By offering a safe and non-invasive approach to stress management, relaxation therapy holds promise as a valuable intervention for improving the overall well-being and quality of life of the elderly population.

Integrating relaxation therapy into the care regimen for elderly individuals in old age homes has the potential to mitigate the adverse effects of stress and promote healthy aging. Further research and implementation efforts are warranted to fully realize the benefits of relaxation therapy in enhancing the psychosocial health of elderly individuals in institutional settings.

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