

Sociological Study of Non-Communicable Diseases and the Sick Role of Senior Citizens

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Sri Lanka is the fastest aging nation in the South Asia. Aging in Sri Lanka has resulted in a series of socio- economic issues. Vulnerability for diseases increase with the age. A high elderly population would not be a problem if they are economically and physically independent. Rapid growth of non-communicable diseases is a current reality in Sri Lanka and elderly population remains the most affected. Sick role of elderly population in Sri Lanka is under researched. The main objective is to study the non-communicable diseases of senior citizens along with their sick role experience. Identifying the most and the least common non-communicable diseases in the field, problems encountered and coping mechanisms against illness, and understanding the patient's rationalization of sickness become the specific objectives of the study. Interviews, questionnaires and simple observation were the methods of primary data collection. Boraluketiya Grama Niladhari division of Balapitiya divisional secretariat division in Galle district of Sri Lanka was the research field. A random sample of 100 families included senior citizens above 60 years suffered from non-communicable diseases. About 78% of elders suffered from hypertension while 42% and 32% had Diabetes and heart diseases respectively. A higher percentage of female elders suffered non- communicable diseases. Majorly with deteriorated health are unemployed dependents and they experienced a significant emotional breakdown. Dependency on medications has become a habitual practice responding physical discomforts they suffer. All elderly patients believed medical pluralism with a predominant inclination towards western medicine. There are significant changes in their sick role behavior with the age although, they identify with the sick role relatively earlier.

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