

**Depression and loneliness among elders at the State Elders' Home – Kaithady, Jaffna**

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**Background and objective:** Physical diseases, psychological illness, and adjustment problems are frequently encountered in aging. In Sri Lanka, 12.3% of the population is aged 60 years or above—the highest in South Asia. The proportion of institutionalised elders is rising with attendant mental health problems such as depression and loneliness. Institutionalized elders lack community resources, heightening their vulnerability to depression and loneliness. This study aimed to assess depression, loneliness, and their associated socio-demographic and health-related factors among elderly people in the State Elders' Home – Kaithady, Jaffna.

**Methods:** An institution-based analytical cross-sectional study was conducted among 127 elders at the State Elders' Home – Kaithady, Jaffna. Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee at Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Data collection utilized interviewer-administered questionnaires and data extraction sheets, including the Geriatric Depression Scale and a locally prepared loneliness scale validated for content by a psychiatrist, using the Kobocollect Toolbox. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS, including Chi-square test, Independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, and correlation coefficient test.

**Results:** In the sample, males comprised 56.7%, with a mean age of 72.46 years (SD 9.63). Among the elders, 56.7% were depressed; females had higher mean Geriatric Depression Scale scores. Over a third (40.2%) experienced moderate loneliness, similar across genders. Visual problems, hypertension, and diabetes were common. Depression was significantly associated with occupation ( $p=0.002$ ) and loneliness ( $p<0.001$ ). Marital status, presence of children and duration of stay were neither associated with depression nor loneliness.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:** Depression and loneliness among institutionalized elders are often underdiagnosed and untreated. The results of this study indicate the need to enhance the mental health and quality of life of institutionalised elders. Recommendations include a detailed evaluation of depression and treatment of those affected, and ensuring that residents of elders' homes receive improved social services.

**Keywords:** Institutionalized elders, Depression, Loneliness, Elders' homes, Jaffna.