

COVID-19: ODISHA'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK ON ELDERLY

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COVID-19: Odisha's Economic Outlook on Elderly

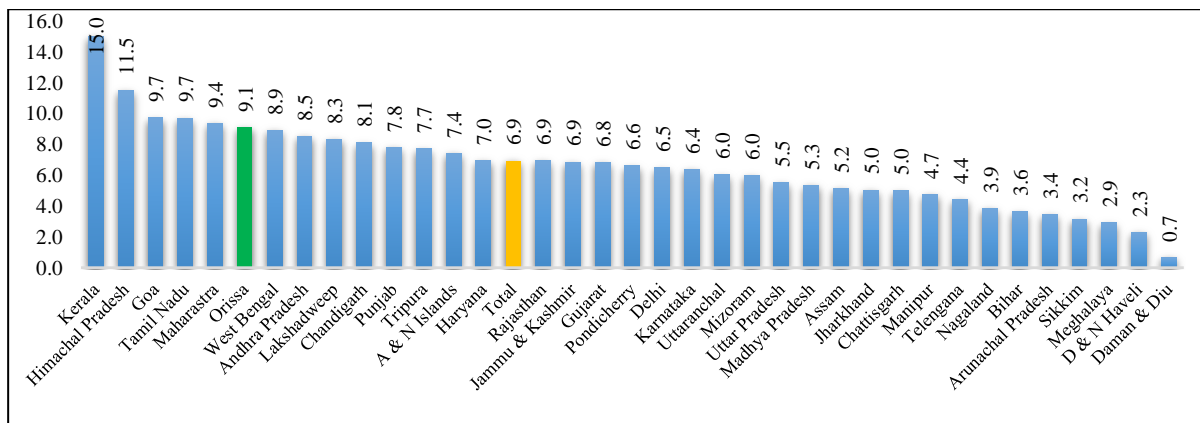
The COVID-19 humanitarian health crisis is drastically impacting the global population. Although all age groups are at risk of contracting COVID-19, older people face a significant risk of developing severe illness if they contract the disease. The share of the elderly population affected by the COVID-19 is 4% in Odisha as on 04 July 2020. Further, the percentage share of total chronic ailment is much higher for the elderly population i.e. 22.5% for India and 15.4% for Odisha. In this regard, both the Central and State Governments need to take proper policy measures for the elderly population, particularly with potential underlying health conditions.

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought considerable economic bearing, human grief, and major demand and supply disruption across the globe. Besides the perpetrating increase of health crisis worldwide, the COVID-19 has also resulted into a widespread economic crisis across the world including India. As a consequence, the global economy is projected (IMF, 2020) to contract by (-3%) in FY 2020 and revive to 5.8 % in FY 2021, while in India it is projected to decline to 1.9% in FY 2020 and is estimated to revive at 7.4% in FY 2021. All the data significantly points towards the fact that, the consequences of this pandemic would be far worse than the 2008 global financial crisis. To address this pandemic, the state governments as well as the central government have taken several measures, for instance, social isolation, lockdowns, and widespread closures of economic activities, to slow down the spread of the virus.

As per the recent study conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the COVID-19 death rate among the elderly is high in comparison to the death rate among children and young adults. Although the susceptibility infection of the disease is higher among all the population segments, the fatality and risk are significantly higher among the elderly population. For example, in Italy, the case fatality rate among the population is 7.2 per 1000 population, while it is 20.5 among the elderly in the 65 and above age group. The COVID-19 outbreak has also brought out a serious policy concern across the globe, as the elderly across the globe are highly susceptible to contract the virus.

In India, both the Central and State Government have taken several measures and policy actions to combat this situation. In case the virus spread further, States with a high proportion of the elderly population are going to suffer from a serious health crisis. According to the Health Ministry data, 50% of coronavirus deaths in India (June 2020) are in the age group of 60 and above and therefore it becomes quite crucial to take proper measures and care for the elderly population. Under this backdrop, this analytical work has particularly analysed the pandemic on the elderly population in Odisha.

Figure-1: Share of elderly population across major Indian States

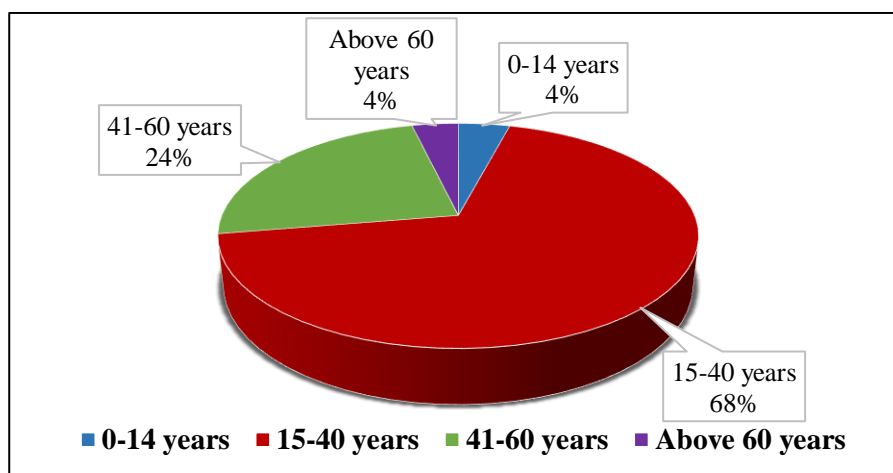


Source: NSSO Health Round, 2017-18

As per the recent National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) survey, the share of the elderly population in India is 6.9%. In Odisha, the total elderly population is around 0.40 crores and on the national level, it stands at 9.12 crore (As per 2017-18 - NSSO Health consumption survey). The share of the elderly population is highest in Kerala (15%) followed by Himachal Pradesh (11.5%), Goa (9.7%), Tamil Nadu (9.7%), Maharashtra (9.4%) and Odisha (9.1%).

As per the latest COVID-19 statistics in Odisha (04th July 2020, Health Department, Odisha), the share of the elderly population affected by COVID-19 is 4% (318 out of 8601 sample positives), while the share of sample positives is higher for the age group of 15-40, which is 68%. Although the children and young adult population are less vulnerable to this virus but they may act as carriers of the virus and can significantly impact the elderly population (+60 age group) in their vicinity. As on 04th July 2020, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) (Total death/Total Positive Cases) is 0.40% in Odisha and 2.87% at the National level. While the prevalence rate ((Total COVID-19 Positive cases/Total population) per million) per million is 196 in the state.

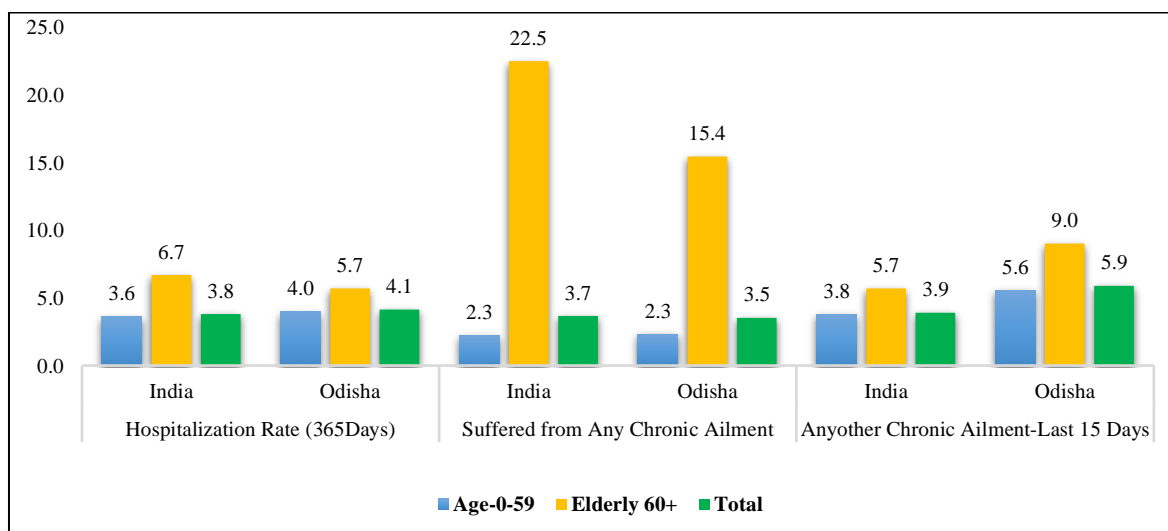
Figure-2: Age-wise breakup: sample positive COVID-19 cases in Odisha



Source: Health Department Odisha, as on 04 July, 2020

The NSSO Health consumption survey (2017-18) shows that both the rate of hospitalization and chronic ailment is much higher among the elderly's as compared to the age group of 0-59 (both in India and Odisha). However, as per the last 15 days, outpatient care is concerned, the share of chronic ailment is much higher for Odisha as compared to National levels.

Figure-3: Population hospitalization and suffering from the different disease in Odisha per episode

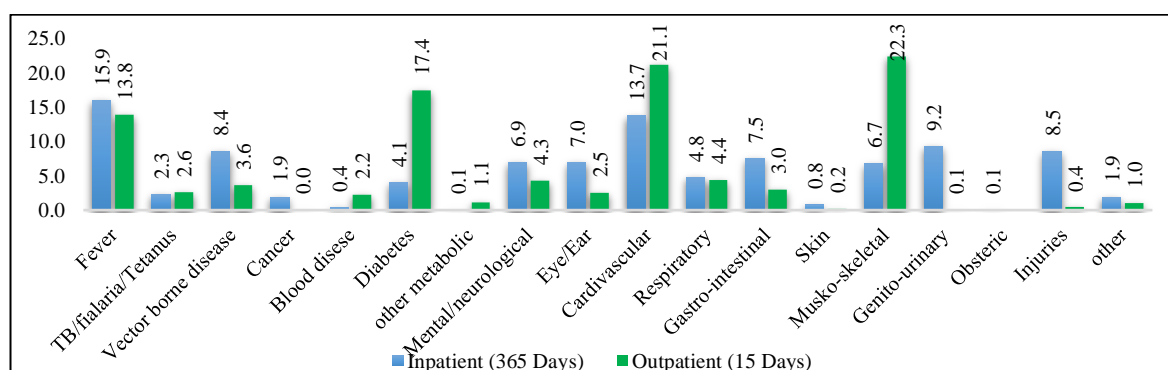


Source: NSSO Health Consumption Round, 2017-18

In the current pandemic situation, both the Central and State Governments need to devise proper policy measures for the elderly, as the percentage share of total chronic ailments is much higher and stands at 22.5% for India and 15.4% for Odisha.

Further, the share of the elderly population as per episodes suffering from different chronic ailments is presented in Figure-4. These different ailments include fever, TB, vector-borne disease, cancer, blood disease, diabetes, mental, cardiovascular disease, etc. Out of the total hospitalization cases (365 days) in Odisha, the share of fever is (15.9%), cardiovascular (13.7%), genito-urinary (9.2%), injuries (8.5%), vecto-borne disease (8.4%), gastro-intestinal (7.5%) and the ailment rate is lower for other metabolic diseases. While the ailment share for the outpatient (15 Days) are musko-skeletal (22.3%), cardiovascular (21.1%), diabetes (17.4%), ever (13.8%), respiratory (4.4%) and lower for genito-urinary and cancer.

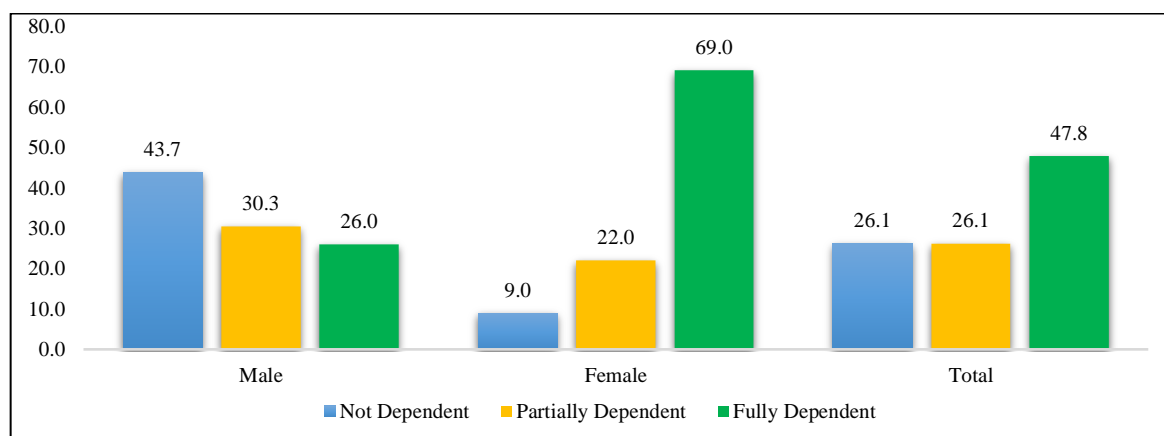
Figure-4: Elderly Population suffering from the different disease in Odisha (as per ailment)



Source: NSSO Health Consumption Round, 2017-18

Across genders, the state of economic dependence shows that the elderly share of economic dependence is much higher for females (69%) as compared to males (26%). Given the high dependency among the elderly female population, the State Government needs to devise and initiate proper policy measures like providing adequate financing to businesses and MSMEs so that income levels of people do not suffer. State also needs to focus on other non-communicable diseases and should put in place relevant measures for providing relief to the elderly population.

Figure-5: Level of economic dependence across genders in Odisha



Source: NSSO Health Consumption Round, 2017-18

Support for older age groups, their families and their caregivers are an essential part of India's comprehensive response to the pandemic. The Central and State Government has already taken various policy measures for the elderly population for instance, National Programme for Health Care of The Elderly (NPHCE) (In this scheme, the Centre will bear 75% of the total budget and the State Government will contribute 25% of the budget). Under Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 and the Odisha COVID-19 Regulation, 2020, the Government of Odisha has empowered all Collectors and District Magistrates, all Municipal Commissioners, all Eos of ULBs, for home delivery of old-age Pension to beneficiaries and accordingly arrangements have been made keeping the social distancing guidelines in mind. Further, provisioning of reverse quarantine facilities to the persons suffering from various ailments is crucial in the present juncture.

To ensure the availability of adequate finance through relief measures in the time of crisis, initially, the Government of Odisha had announced the advance payment of pensions for four months under the National Social Assistance Programme and Madhu Babu Pension scheme. From the field level observations, it is observed that, Govt. of Odisha has taken significant measures to provide active community level support to the old people. Gram Panchayat (GP) level team has been formed in every Gram Panchayat comprising of PRI members, volunteers, teachers, ANM and ASHA. The team has identified and prepared a list of elderly and senior citizens, poor, destitute, and divyangs for providing ration, cooked food, medicine and other necessary items daily and monitoring their health status on a regular basis. Block level nodal team has been formed to monitor the activities and performance of GP level nodal team regular intervals. However, there is no specific efforts being made across the state to

reach out towards the senior citizens living alone and who are quite vulnerable in present pandemic to several critical challenges, including regular provisions of medical attentions, different diets, etc.

Further, during the time period of lockdown, senior citizens need safe access to nutritious food, basic supplies, money, medicine to support their physical health, and social care. According to the field level observations, the number of senior citizens staying in camps is very low compared to young adults and middle-aged population segments across the State. For those few elderly's while staying in camps, dissemination of accurate information is critical to ensure that they have clear messages and resources on how to stay physically and mentally healthy during the pandemic and what to do if they fall ill.

For older people, it will also be important to maintain a healthy lifestyle while in self-quarantine or in isolation or also for the unaffected old people during the lockdown period. They are often dependent on the support from communities and careers in maintaining daily routines, staying active, and eating nutritious, balanced meals. Besides, mental health during stressful times is also a key consideration. In this regard, Panchayati Raj Institutions can play a critical role in providing care to senior citizens in camp or home quarantine or simply to the unaffected old people during the lockdown period. Govt. of Odisha has instructed all the nodal officers who are in-charge of each GP level camps/Temporary Medical Centres (TMC) to emphasis on giving special care for the old people (though the number is very less) e.g. their regular health check-up by the Medical Officers of the Community Health Centre, regular supply of medicine by the nodal officer to support their physical health, etc. However, it is extremely crucial for the Government to support them more for providing nursing and social care services for senior citizens.
