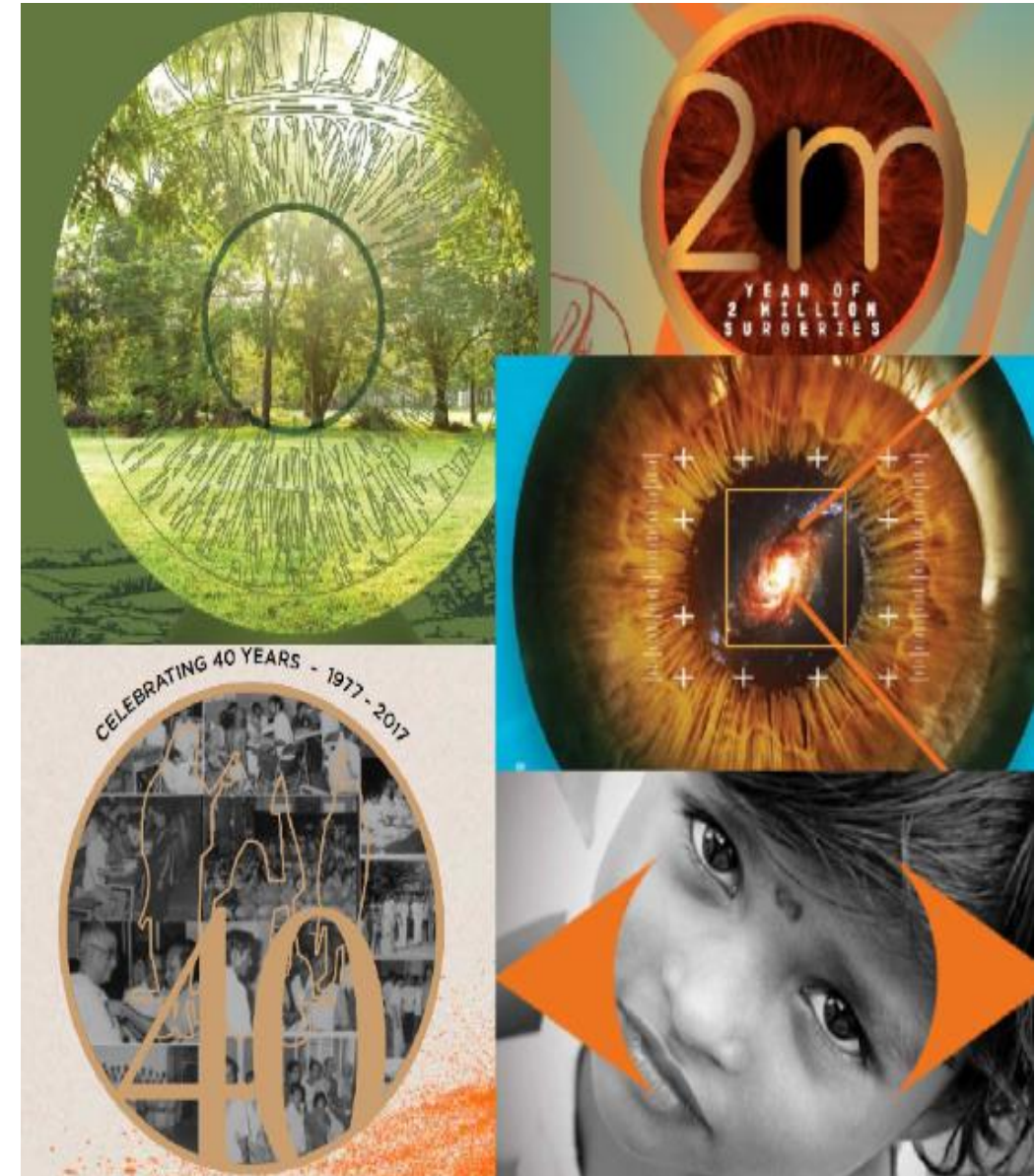


A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION'S "GIFT OF VISION" PROGRAM

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Under the guidance
of
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INTRODUCTION

- Vision impairment and blindness are major public health concerns worldwide, especially in developing countries like India where access to eye care services is limited.
- Globally, at least 2.2 billion people have some form of vision impairment, and cataracts account for over half of all cases of blindness.
- In India, the burden of vision impairment is particularly high, with over 20 million people suffering from vision loss, and cataracts being the leading cause.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that cataracts are responsible for approximately 51% of blindness cases worldwide, affecting nearly 65.2 million people.
- The prevalence of cataracts increases with age, and it is estimated that about 50% of people aged 65 years and older have some degree of cataract formation.
- The global distribution of cataract prevalence is uneven, with higher rates observed in developing countries, particularly in Africa and South-East Asia.
- According to various surveys and reports (National Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey, India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative, and Vision Atlas), cataracts account for 62.4% to 66.2% of visual impairment cases in India.

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- In 2020, India accounted for nearly 60% of the global burden of cataract blindness, with approximately 9.8 million people affected.
- This comprehensive background information highlights the significant burden of vision impairment and cataracts, both globally and specifically in India, underscoring the need for effective interventions and improved access to eye care services, particularly in developing nations.

About Sankara Eye Foundation Coimbatore

- Sankara Eye Foundation is a non-profit organization based in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu that is dedicated to providing high-quality, affordable eye care to underprivileged communities across India.
- Since its inception in 1977, the foundation has been at the forefront of addressing preventable blindness, with a particular focus on cataract, which remains a leading cause of vision impairment in the country.

About Gift of Vision program

- Sankara Eye Foundation's One of flagship initiatives is the "Gift of Vision" program, launched in 1990. This program aims to provide free cataract surgeries (2,06,039 surgeries in 2023) and comprehensive eye care services to individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who would otherwise be unable to access or afford these vital interventions.

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- By eliminating financial barriers, the Gift of Vision program seeks to lighten the burden of preventable blindness and empower beneficiaries to lead more productive and fulfilling lives.
- In addition to the surgical procedures, the program provides comprehensive pre-operative and post-operative care, including counseling, medication, and follow-up visits, to ensure optimal recovery and long-term vision restoration.
- The program's holistic approach extends beyond medical interventions. Through the Gift of Vision program, Sankara Eye Foundation has transformed the lives of countless individuals, enabling them to regain their independence, pursue economic opportunities, and participate more actively in their communities.



Process flow of Community Outreach

Purpose of the Research:

- To conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of Sankara Eye Foundation's Gift of Vision program on the beneficiaries and their communities.
- Investigate the program's effectiveness in restoring vision, improving quality of life, and fostering socioeconomic empowerment among the individuals who have received surgical interventions.

The Problem:

- While the problem of vision impairment and its consequences are well-documented, comprehensive assessments of community-based interventions like the Gift of Vision program are crucial for understanding their real-world impact and informing future strategies.
- The World Health Organization notes the urgent need for effective strategies to prevent and treat vision impairment, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.
- This study aims to address the knowledge gap by providing empirical evidence on the program's outcomes, challenges, and potential areas for improvement.

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Context of the Research:

- India has a high incidence of vision loss, significantly higher than the global average.
- The World Health Organization estimates that around 8 million people in India are blind, accounting for over one-third of the global burden of blindness.
- Socioeconomic disparities often limit access to eye care facilities in India.
- By evaluating a program that offers free eye care to underprivileged communities, this study has the potential to inform policymakers, healthcare providers, and non-profit organizations on effective strategies to address vision-related disabilities and promote inclusive development in India and beyond.

Objectives:

- The main goal is to evaluate how Sankara Eye Foundation's Gift of Vision program affects the eye health, quality of life, and economic well-being of the people who receive the eye care services.
- Understand the holistic impact of program.
- Provide insights that can help improve future eye care initiatives, especially community-based programs in low- and middle-income countries like India, where the need for such services is very high.

Methodology

Objective:

- To assess socio-economic profile of the patients who are undergone non-paying cataract surgery
- To assess how the programme has helped the patient socially.
- To assess what are the economic benefit of the programme to the patient.
- To document few cases to highlight the contribution of the programme in changing the lives of the patients.

Duration of the study: 3 Months

Sample Size: 100

The survey was conducted on patients who had undergone cataract surgery at Sankara Eye Hospital in Coimbatore district between April 2023 and December 2023. During this period, a total of 33,208 patients were selected for cataract surgery.

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To identify the participants for the survey, two criteria were applied:

- 1. Age criteria:** Patients were filtered based on their age to ensure the sample was representative of the target population.
- 2. Surgery type:** Only patients who had undergone cataract surgery were considered, excluding those who had other types of eye surgeries.

After applying these two filters, a group of 280 patients was randomly selected from the eligible pool of cataract surgery patients. To collect data from these 280 patients, personal one-on-one interviews by calling the patients to nearby vision Centres and some patient's interview was done through calling. Out of the 280 patients contacted, a final sample of 100 patients successfully completed the survey and provided their responses.

Study type: Observational Cross-Sectional Study

Inclusion Criteria:

- Patients undergone cataract surgery through the “Gift of Vision” Program in Coimbatore.
- Willing to provide informed consent and participate in follow-up assessments.

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Exclusion Criteria:

- Patients who gone through other type of surgeries.
- Patients who are unwilling to participate in follow-up assessments.

Study Tools: Structured questionnaires to assess the social and economic Impact of “Gift of Vision” Programme.

Sampling Technique: Random Sampling.

Data Collection Method: Primary data will be collected through observation or through interviewing interview by structured questionnaire and Telephonic interviews, secondary data will be collected through the Sankara Eye Foundation’s MIS.

Data Analysis: Microsoft Excel

Analysis of Findings

The present study employed an observational cross-sectional study design to evaluate the impact of Sankara Eye Foundation's "Gift of Vision" program on its beneficiaries in Coimbatore. The study population consisted of 100 individuals who underwent free cataract surgery through the program between April 2023 and December 2023. The collected data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics and visualizations, facilitating the interpretation of the program's impact.

These are research questions:-

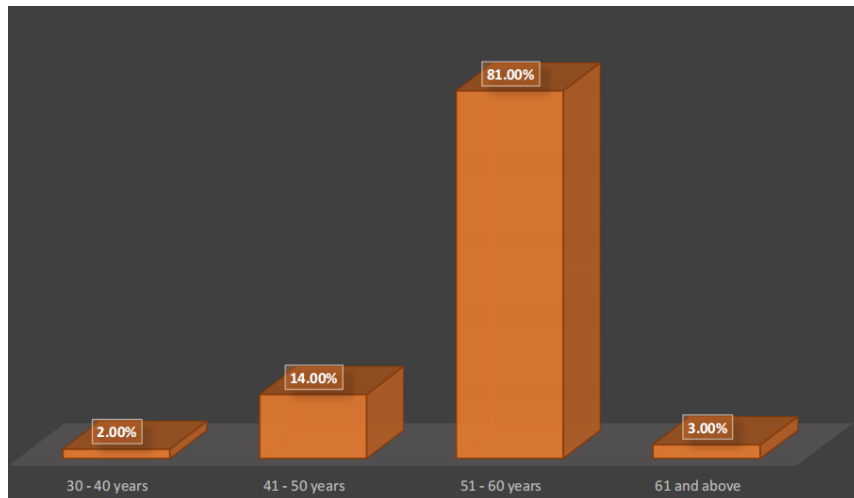
- How the programme has helped the patient socially.
- What are the economic benefit of the programme to the patient.

The study objectives were as follows:-

- To assess socio-economic profile of the patients who are undergone non-paying cataract surgery
- To assess how the programme has helped the patient socially.
- To assess what are the economic benefit of the programme to the patient.
- To document few cases to highlight the contribution of the programme in changing the lives of the patients.

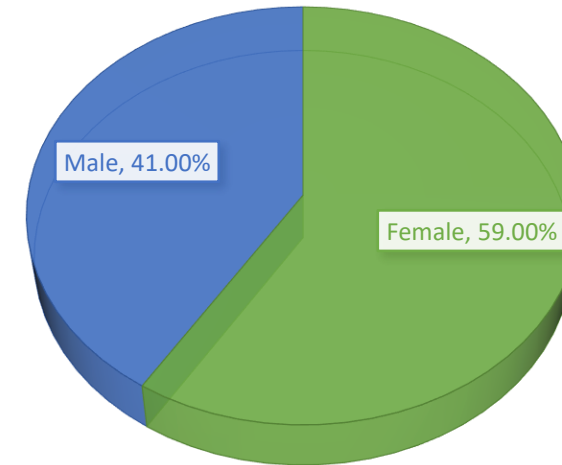
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Findings of Objective 1: To assess socio-economic profile of the patients who are undergone non-paying cataract surgery



AGE GROUP OF THE RESPONDENTS

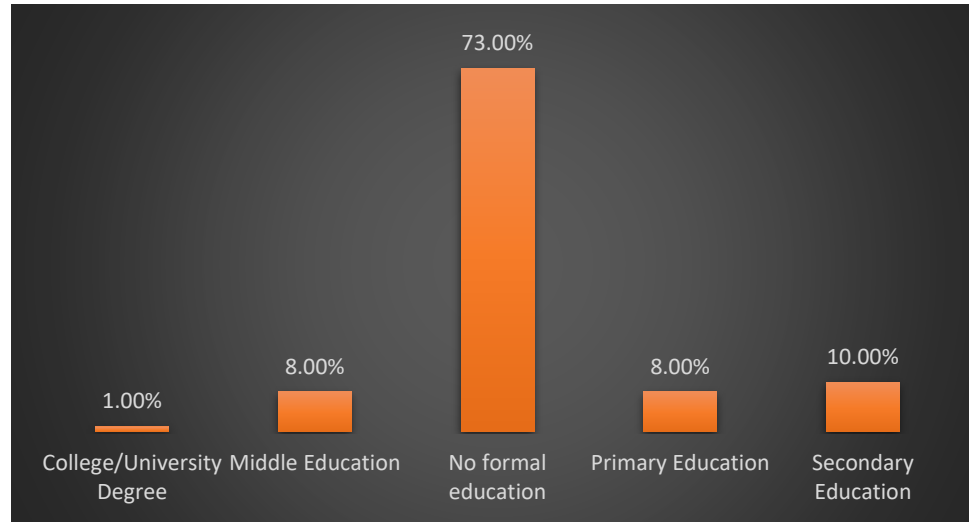
The age group of the respondents varies from 30 – 61 years and above while the highest number of respondents belong from 51 – 60 years of age group.



GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

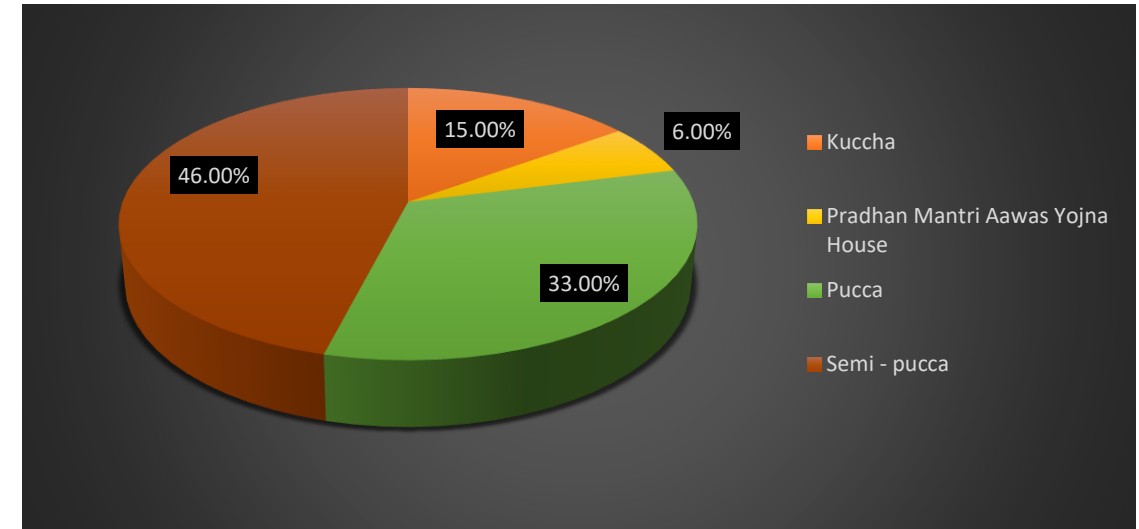
Majority of the respondents (i.e, 59 percent) are female, while 41 percent of the respondents are male.

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EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

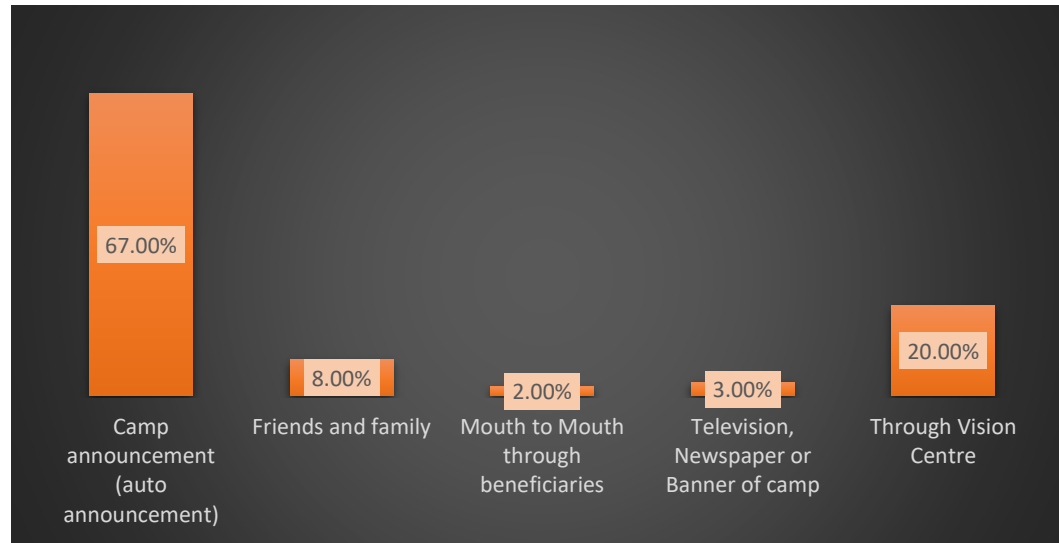
Majority of the respondents (i.e, 73 percent) have no formal education, 10 percent of the respondents having secondary education, 8 percent of the respondents having middle education, 8 percent of the respondents having primary education, only 1 percent of the respondent having college/university degree.



RESPONDENTS HOUSE TYPE

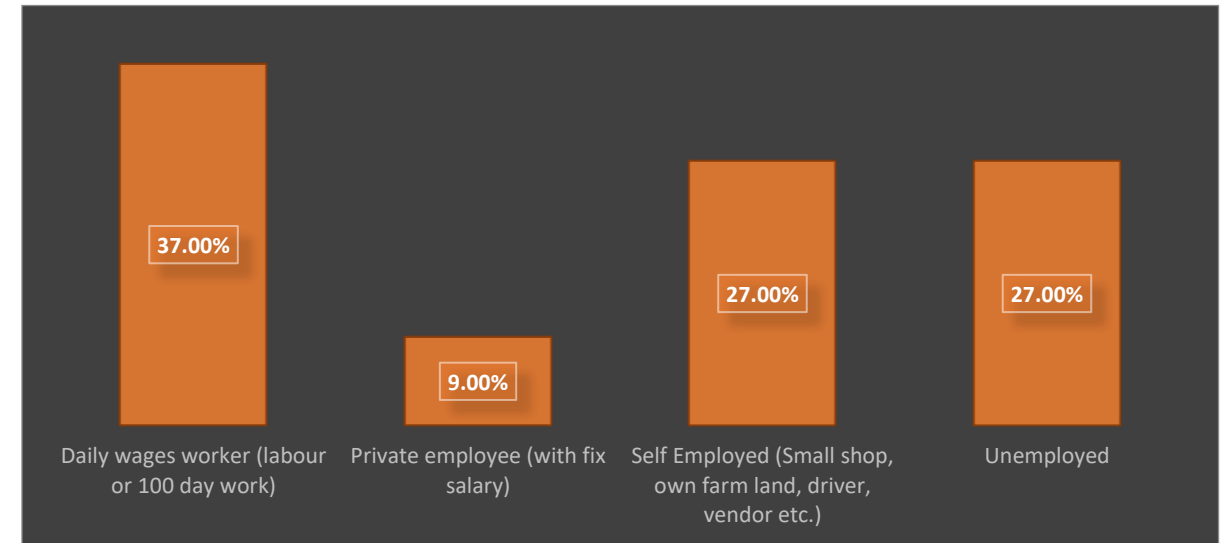
Majority of the respondents (i.e, 46 percent) having semi – pucca house type, 33 percent of the respondents having pucca house, 15 percent of the respondents having kuccha house, while only 6 percent of the respondents having Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna House.

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RESPONDENTS HEAR ABOUT FREE CATARACT SURGERY

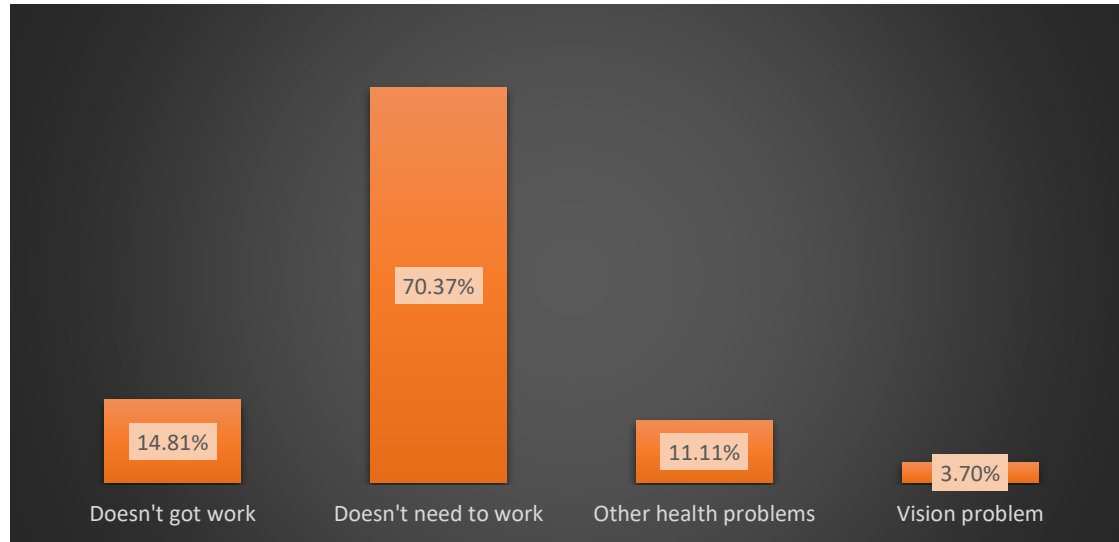
Majority of the respondents (i.e, 67 percent) hear about free cataract surgery camp through camp announcement (auto announcement), 20 percent of the respondents hear through vision Centres, 8 percent of the respondents through friends and family, 3 percent of the respondents through television, newspaper or banner of the camp, and only 2 percent of the respondents through mouth-to-mouth promotion by beneficiaries.



OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Majority of the respondents (i.e, 37 percent) are daily wages workers who engaged in construction work or 100 days MGNREGA work, 27 percent of the respondents are self-employed, 27 percent of the respondents are unemployed, and only 9 percent of the respondents are engaged in private job with fixed monthly salary.

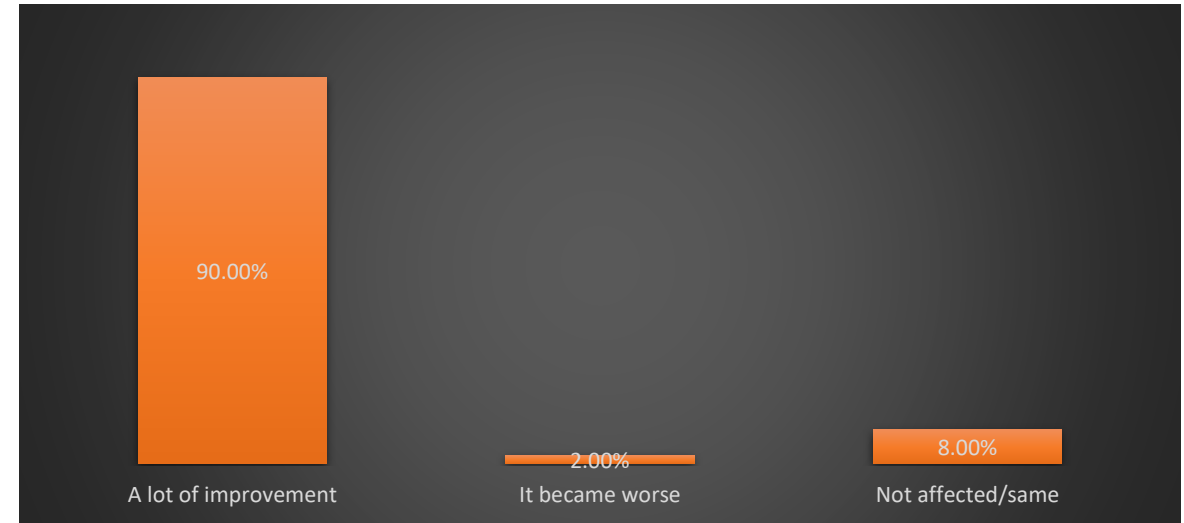
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REASON OF UNEMPLOYMENT

From those 27 percent unemployed majority of them (i.e, around 70 percent) doesn't need to work, around 15 percent of the respondents doesn't get work due to lack of skills, around 11 percent are unemployed due to some another health issues, while only around 4 percent are unemployed due to some major vision problem.

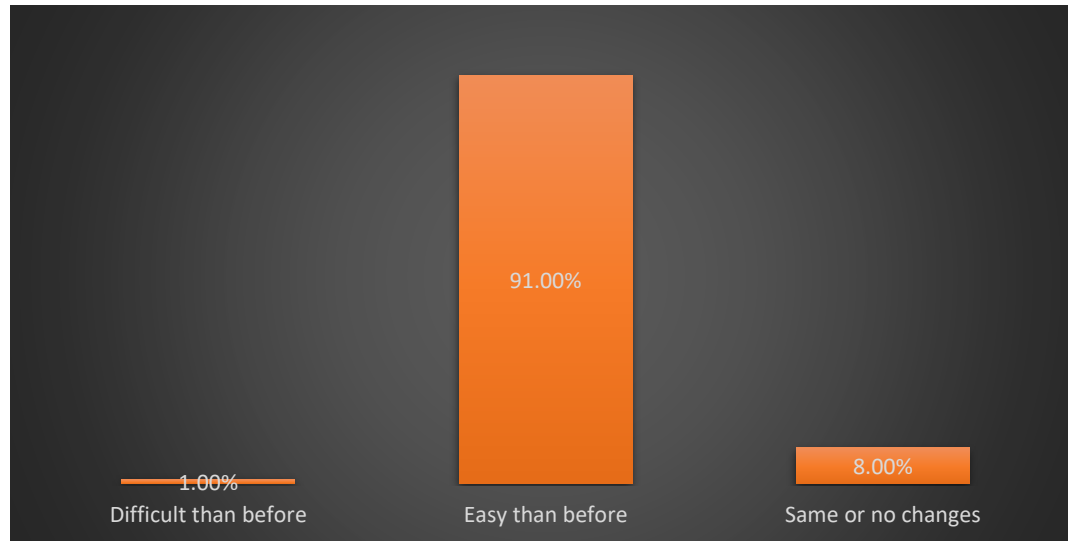
Findings of Objective 2: To assess how the programme has helped the patient socially.



ABILITY TO TAKE PART IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AFTER CATARACT SURGERY

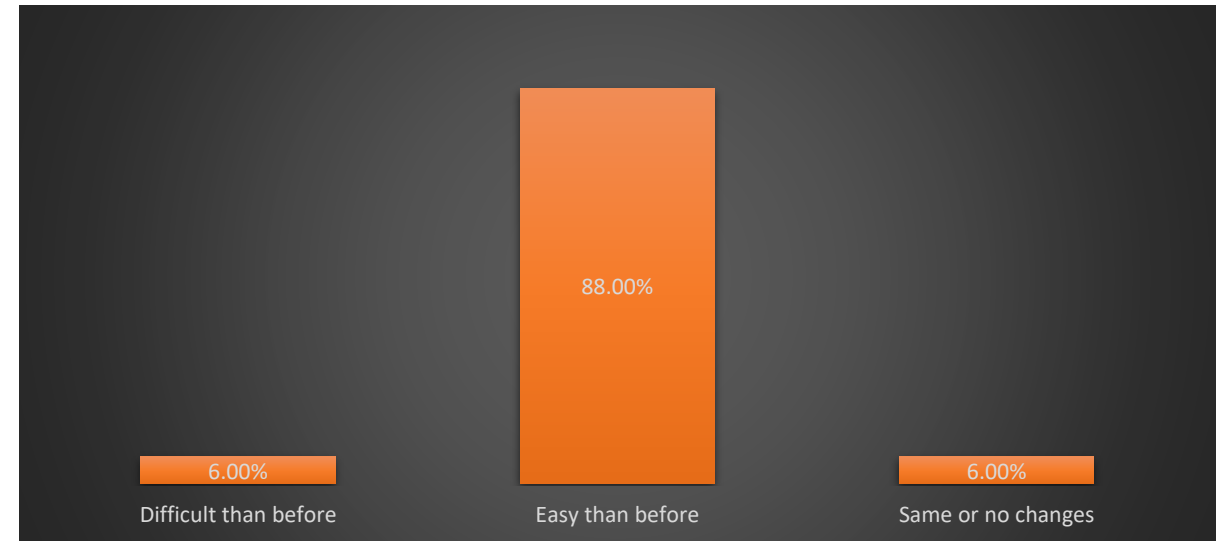
After the cataract surgery majority of the respondent's (i.e, 90 percent) feels that in their ability to take part in social activities they see a lot of improvement, 8 percent of the respondents feel same or the no changes in participation in social activities, while only 2 percent of the respondents says that participation in social activities became worse after the cataract surgery.

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DIFFERENCE NOTICED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN DRIVING OR GOING OUTSIDE AT NIGHT TIME

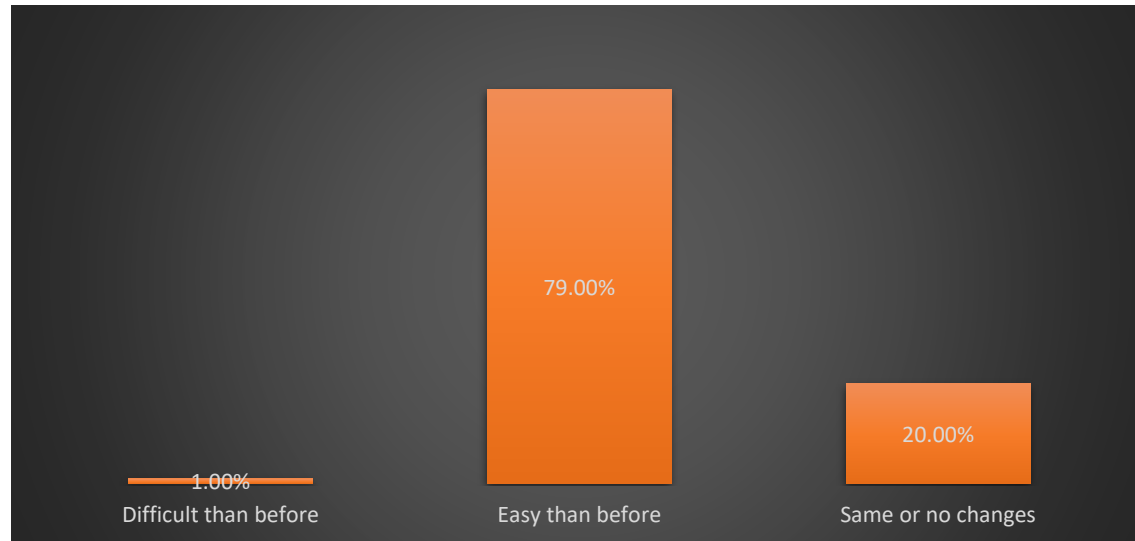
After the cataract surgery majority of the respondent's (i.e, 91 percent) feels that in their ability to driving or going outside at night time became easy compare to before, 8 percent of the respondents says that they feel same or changes, while only 1 percent of the respondents says that driving or going outside at night time became difficult compare to before after the cataract surgery.



DIFFERENCE NOTICED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN DOING WORK UNDER DIRECT SUNLIGHT

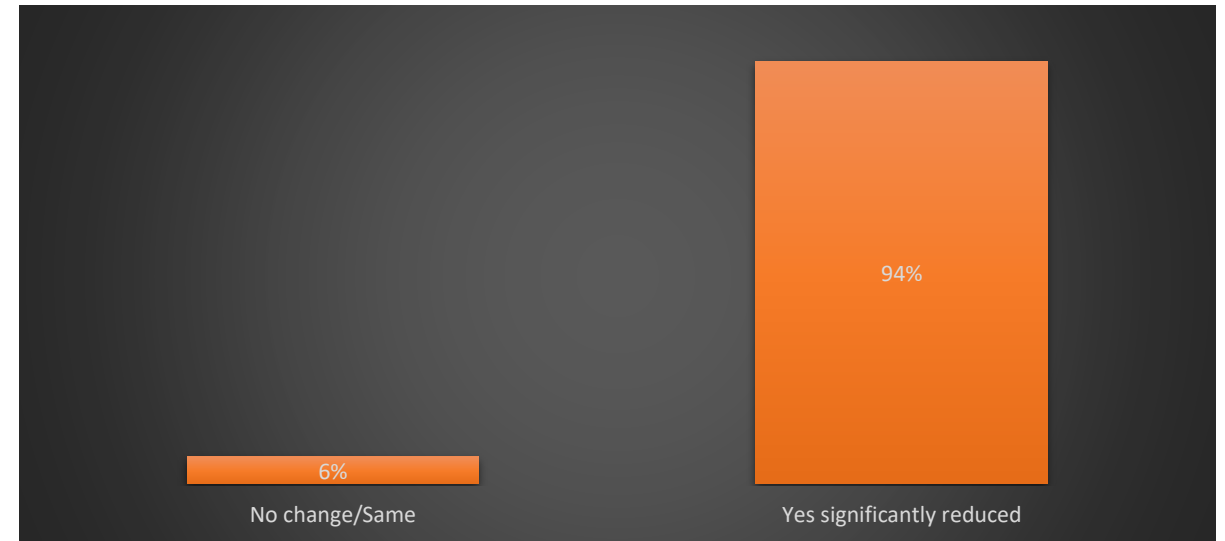
After the cataract surgery majority of the respondent's (i.e, 88 percent) feels that in their ability to work under direct sunlight became easy compare to before, 6 percent of the respondents says that they feel same or changes, also 6 percent of the respondents says that work under direct sunlight became difficult compare to before after the cataract surgery.

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DIFFERENCE NOTICED BY THE RESPONDENTS WHILE USING STAIRS

After the cataract surgery majority of the respondent's (i.e, 79 percent) feels that in their ability to use stairs became easy compare to before, 20 percent of the respondents says that they feel same or changes, and only 1 percent of the respondents says that their ability to use stairs became difficult compare to before after the cataract surgery.

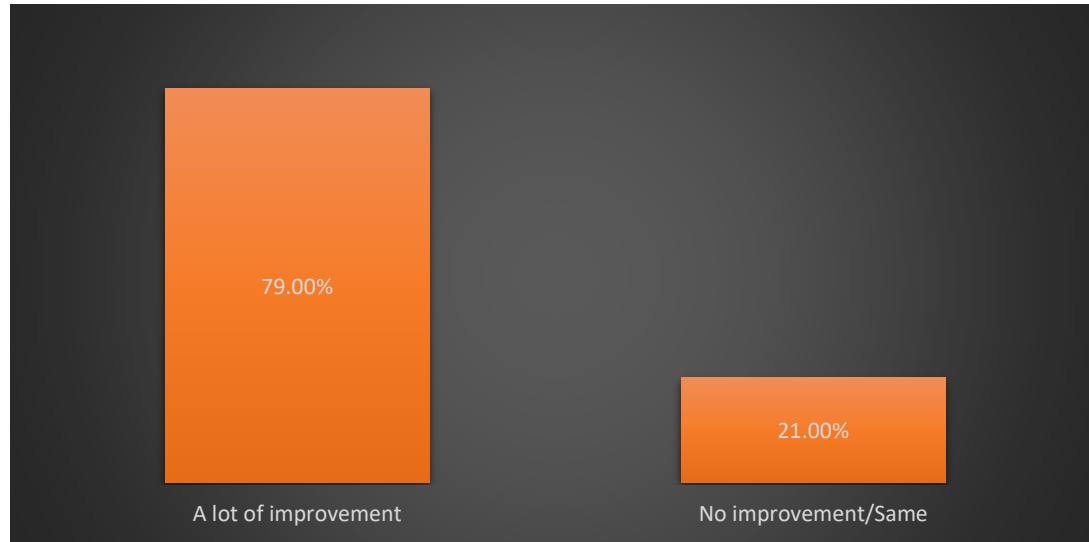


ROLE OF SURGERY RESPONDENTS FELT IN REDUCING ANY DIFFICULTY OR CHALLENGE FROM DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Majority of the respondents (i.e, 94 percent) says that yes, they feel that the surgery has reduced the difficulties or challenges they faced while doing day to day task due to poor vision, and only 6 percent of the respondents says they feel the same or no changes in difficulties or challenges they faced while doing day to day task due to poor vision.

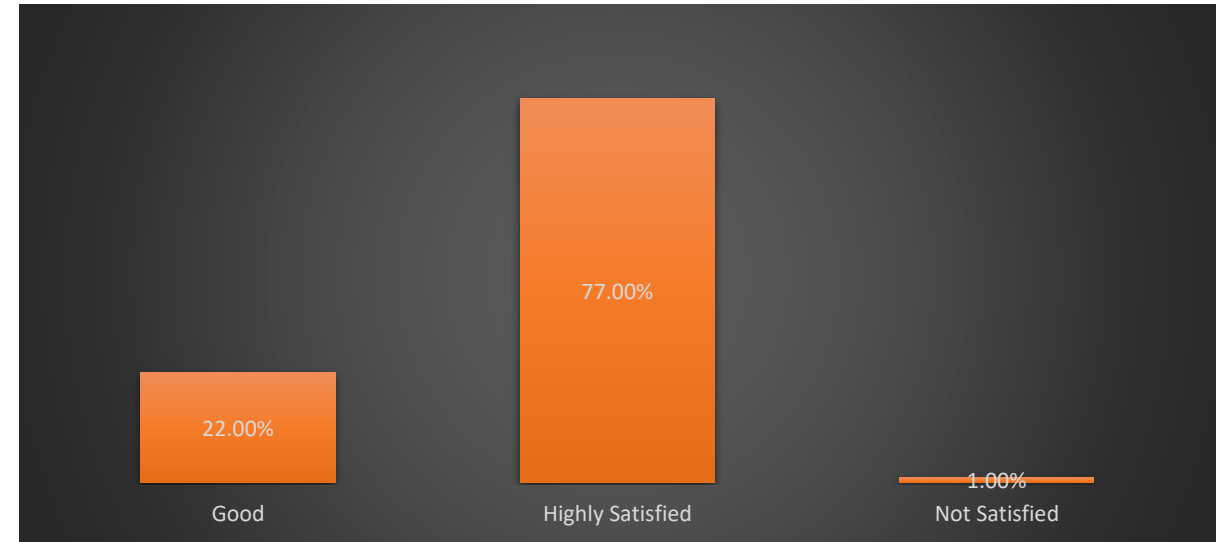
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Finding of Objective 3: To assess what are the economic benefit of the programme to the patient.



EFFECT OF CATARACT SURGERY ON PRODUCTIVITY OR ABILITY TO GENERATE INCOME

Majority of the respondents (i.e, 79 percent) says that yes, they feel a lot of improvement in their productivity or ability to generate income, while 21 percent of the respondents says that they feel no improvement in their productivity or ability to generate income.



SATISFACTION LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS ON CARE RECEIVED AT SANKARA EYE HOSPITAL

Majority of the respondents (i.e, 77 percent) says that they were highly satisfied with the care they received at Sankara Eye Hospital, 22 percent of the respondents says that they received good care, while only 1 percent of the respondent says that they are not satisfied with the care received at Sankara Eye Hospital.

Testimonials

Findings of Objective 4: To document few cases to highlight the contribution of the programme in changing the lives of the patients.



Ranganathan, a 53-year-old teacher, had been struggling with a cataract in his left eye, which significantly impaired his vision. During the day, the glare from the sun made it difficult for him to see clearly, and at night, the bright headlights of oncoming vehicles left him virtually blinded while driving.

"Before the surgery, I had a hard time driving during the day because the sun would hit my eye, and I couldn't see properly," Ranganathan recalled. "At night, the flashing lights from buses and other vehicles made it nearly impossible for me to drive safely."

Fortunately, Ranganathan learned about the free cataract surgery provided by Sankara Eye Foundation. After undergoing the procedure, his vision was restored, and he could once again drive with confidence, both during the day and at night.

"Thanks to Sankara Eye Foundation, I can now drive without any issues, regardless of the time of day or night," Ranganathan expressed with gratitude. "The surgery has made a tremendous difference in my life, and I'm incredibly thankful for their support."

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Pappathi, a 51-year-old daily wage worker, found herself struggling with a cataract that had caused a cloudy formation in her eyes, severely impacting her vision. Her life took a turn for the better when a Village Health Volunteer (VHV) identified her condition during a door-to-door screening process.

"Just a few days ago, I couldn't see properly due to the cataract," Pappathi recounted. "I was unable to carry out my daily work, which is essential for supporting my family."

Fortunately, Pappathi was then brought to the Sankara Eye Hospital, where she received comprehensive care and support. "The staff at the hospital treated me exceptionally well," she said. "They provided me with good, healthy, and hygienic food throughout the day, including refreshments."

Beyond the physical care, Pappathi was grateful for the clear communication and guidance she received from the hospital staff. "They explained the dos and don'ts to us in a way that was easy to understand," she added.

After undergoing cataract surgery at the hospital, Pappathi's vision was restored, allowing her to resume her daily work with ease. "I am deeply grateful to Sankara Eye Foundation for giving me back my sight," she expressed. "Their care and support have truly changed my life."

Recommendations

1. Increase awareness Programs:

- The current study, with its limited sample size and focus on Coimbatore, suggests a potential to increase the current 20% footfall by enhancing publicity efforts through vision centers. However, factors such as camp proximity to vision centers and the economic status of visitors should be taken into account in future studies. Consider conducting larger-scale studies to better understand the effectiveness of publicity through vision centers and its impact on footfall across all of Sankara Eye Foundation's Hospitals.

2. Strengthen Community Engagement:

- The current study, based on a limited sample from Coimbatore, suggests encouraging more mouth-to-mouth promotion by beneficiaries (currently at 2%) through community ambassador programs where satisfied patients share their experiences.

3. Measure Long-Term Impact:

- Collaborate with academic institutions to conduct longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impact of the program on beneficiaries' socioeconomic status and quality of life. These studies should collect and analyze data on employment, income, and social participation before and after surgery, leveraging the expertise and resources of universities and research centers to quantify the broader impact of restored vision.

4. Increase Program Visibility:

- Use social media and other platforms to share success stories and testimonials from those who have benefited from the program. This not only increases visibility but also can inspire more people to support the cause.

Conclusion

- The "Gift of Vision" program by Sankara Eye Foundation in Coimbatore has demonstrated a positive impact on beneficiaries' lives, with improvements in social engagement, daily life navigation, work capabilities, and mobility post-cataract surgery.
- Beneficiaries reported reduced challenges in daily tasks and increased productivity and income-generating capacity, along with high satisfaction levels with the care received at Sankara Eye Hospital.
- The program focuses on serving underprivileged populations, and offers multidimensional benefits, including vision restoration, social participation, and economic empowerment.
- Recommendations to enhance the program include increasing awareness, strengthening community engagement, assessing long-term impact, and improving program visibility.
- The "Gift of Vision" program serves as an exemplary model of a community-based intervention addressing preventable blindness and promoting inclusive development in resource-constrained settings.



THANK YOU

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