



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST ELDERLY: CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence refers to the violence which the elderly at home are subjected to by their children and family members. The main objective of this study is to know the way of inflicting injury and the reasons behind the violence against the elderly. For this study, reported cases (65) were taken from print media. The cases were taken from 2004 to 2014 and contents were analyzed through quantitative content method. It was found that the highest number of perpetrators were sons (40%). In more than half the cases (58.37%) blow and hand were used for the violence. In India, domestic violence against the elderly largely goes unreported. It is because of the dependency of olds on their children and having a fear of not being looked after or even ousted if the violence is revealed outside the home.

KEYWORDS : Elderly, Violence, Family

INTRODUCTION

The speed of population ageing world-wide has given rise to fear that abuse of older persons may increase in its incidence, prevalence and complexity. Globally, the number of cases of elder maltreatment is projected to increase, as many countries have rapidly ageing populations whose needs may not be met easily, due to resource constraints. As the elder population increases, so does elder mistreatment, abuse and neglect. Elderly abuse is a hidden and often ignored problem in society. Violence and related forms of abuse against elders is a global public health and human rights problem, with far-reaching consequences, resulting in death, disability, and exploitation with collateral effects on the victim's well-being (Kattakayam, 2014).

The Violence against elderly includes acts of aggression or abuse that intentionally or unintentionally cause injury to a person. Elder mistreatment is a form of violence against the elderly that usually involves abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Although an intent to cause harm is central to the concept of violence (Ferguson, 2010).

Although we now recognize violence against the elderly as a crime, historically, elder abuse was viewed as a social problem. With the legislation of adult protective services statutes, mandatory reporting, elder abuse has been criminalized (Payne, Berg, & Toussaint, 2001). This criminalization requires law enforcement to intervene in elder abuse allegation investigations and to prevent further incidents (Blakely & Dolon, 2001).

June 15 is celebrated for world elder abuse awareness day. One in three elderly in India is facing abuse and a majority of them is residing with their families. The third annual Help- age Survey on elder abuse in India revealed details of how an ageing India is silently suffering abuse to preserve family honour (www.tributeindia.com).

The traditional family system has eroded in India where taking care of the aged has become more of a burden than a duty. Rapid development coupled with career pressures and consumerism and increased life expectancy has led to a spurt in the cases of elderly abuse and neglect. According to a report, 23% of the elderly in reported abuse – be it disrespect, verbal abuse, neglect and in many cases physical abuse (23%elderly, 2013).

OBJECTIVES

1. To know the way of inflicting injury to elderly
2. To know the reasons behind the violence

METHODOLOGY

For the present purpose newspaper reports from January 2004 to December 2014, Hindustan Times, Bhopal edition (M.P) and The Times of India, Kanpur edition (U.P) have been the source of data. The news items relating to violence against the elderly were

systematically collected and their content was analyzed. 65 cases of violence against the elderly have been found reported in media and were presented in tabular form. Thus the secondary data was the main source of the study. The study has been carried on the basis of the victim's gender, residence, age, number of victims, offender's gender, victim- offender relation, reasons for violence, and ways of violence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Victim's Gender: In this study both male and female victims were found victimized by the caregivers. Males (52.11%) were found more victimized by the care givers than Females (47.89%). In 5 cases both husband and wife were abused whereas, in 1 case two males were affected by the caregivers. Result shows that there is no gender difference in violence.

Victim's Residence: The result shows that the elderly were found more abused in urban area in comparison to the rural area (63.08% and 36.92%). It is due to unreported cases are more in rural area than urban area. Dependency may also be the cause of abuse of elderly.

Victim's Age: Analysis shows that highest numbers (40.85%) of the victim belong to the age group of 60-64 years. 1/4th of the victims were found between 65-69 years of age group. Nearly 33% cases belong to 75 to above 90 years of age who were abused by the caregivers. Finding shows that nearly centenarians were also targeted for abusing.

Table 1: Victims- caregivers' relationship

Relation	Percentage
Son	40.00
Grand-son	12.31
Daughter-in-law	10.77
Nephew	6.15
Son & daughter-in-law	7.69
Others	24.08
Total	100.00

In victim-caregivers-relationship (Table 1), 40% of the cases, where sons were found accused of abuses. After Sons, Grandsons (12.31%) were found as abusers of elderly people. In 10.77% of cases, only daughter-in-law was responsible for abusing the elderly. In other cases, Caretaker (9.23%), Husband (4.62%), Brother (3.8%), Relative (4.62%), and Wife (1.54%) were the others who involved in abusing of the elderly.

Case-

During the argument, daughter in law with the help of her neighbours and a youth allegedly blackened elderly lady's face and later poured kerosene oil all over her mother-in-law's body. The four severely thrashed elderly woman in full public view and paraded her in the locality (Daughter-in-Law's, 2008).

Table 2: Weapon used by caregivers

Weapon	Percentage
Piercing and Cutting	20.00
Striking	55.38
Arson	6.15
Fire arms	4.62
Miscellaneous	7.69
Not mentioned	6.19
Total	100.00

Table 2 shows that different types of weapons were used by the caregivers during the violence against the elderly. 20% caregivers used weapons for piercing and cutting such as; axe(30.77%), knife(38.46%), screw-driver(7.69%), glass bottle(7.69%) sickle(7.69%) and sharp-edged weapons(7.69%), 55.38% caregivers used weapons for striking; iron rod(16.66%), stick(8.33%) hand(58.33%), hammer(2.78%), stone(8.33%), spade(2.78%), and wooden club(2.78%). 6.15% arson cases and, 4.62% of firearms were the main weapons used by the caregivers during the elderly violence.

Case –

The elderly man was allegedly killed by his son. The victim, 65 was hit by his son after the victim scolded him. Son attacked his father with a stone. The stone hit the old man on his temple and he fell unconscious (Man dies, 2013).

Table 3: Reasons for abusing

Reasons	Percentage
Valuable things	9.23
Altercation over money/land	23.8
Family dispute	4.62
Domestic quarrel--	24.62
Others	30.8
Not mentioned	7.69
Total	100.00

Table 3 explains about reasons for abusing and used violence against the elderly. Nearly 1/4th cases belong to an altercation over money or land. 9.23% of cases of abuse were reported for valuable things. 24.62% cases were related to the domestic quarrel such as; Denied porn on computer(6.25%), Mother asked son for food(6.25%), Grandmother was disturbed by loud talking(6.25%), Son suspected father had illicit relation with his wife(12.5%), Mother was not interested, getting a son's marriage(12.5%), Witchcraft practicing by parents to his wife(6.25%), Unable to bear cancer afflicted husband(6.25%), Revenge(6.25%), Drunken brawl by victim/son(6.25%), Son demanded pension money(12.5%), Son used to beat his parents for money to consume liquor(6.25%), Father demanded money for personal use(6.25%). Others (30.8%) were included for small issues like taking water from the hand pump, grazing crops by cattle, plucking flowers.

Case –

A man kills father in village when the later refused to give the son his pension money. Victim (65), a retired teacher was taken to a hospital in Etawah, where he was declared dead (Man kills, 2013). Situational violence and its consequences: Consequences of violence found that 26.15% of elderly victims were injured and 73.85% victims died after the violence between elderly and caregivers in the home. Result shows that most of the cases reported under the Indian Penal Code of cognizance offence.

CONCLUSIONS

The apathy of family members towards their elders is a common scenario all over the world (The apathy, 2005). Indian sons, and their wives, aren't treating their aged parents well. A study on abuse of India's elderly, conducted across 20 cities and involving over 5,500 older people, has found that almost one in three (32%) have faced abuse. The son has been found to be the primary abuser in 56% of cases followed by the daughter-in-law in 23% cases (The Home truth, 2012).

This study also reveals that sons were the main abuser (40%) of the elderly. It was followed by daughter-in law, grand-son, and care-taker. Violence was used mostly on the issues of domestic quarrel. In consequences, 73.85% elderly victims were died after the violence Elder abuse is one of the last and general types of family maltreatment to come to public attention. As with other family problems, it is difficult to its sensitivity and invisibility. Clear ideas about the prevalence and nature of elder abuse have been hard to obtain. Misconceptions have flourished in the absence of solid evidence, yet being natural.

The problem of elder abuse cannot be solved if the essential needs of older people- for food, shelter, security and access to health care – are not met. The nations of the world must create an environment in which ageing is accepted as a natural part of life cycle, where anti-ageing attitudes are discouraged, where older people are given the right to live in dignity- free of abuse and exploitation- and are given opportunities to participate fully in educational, cultural, spiritual and economic activities (Randal & German, 1999).

To successfully prevent abuse they have to be identified and counter balanced. Counseling programmes for seniors who are in distress can help increase their confidence and capacities to manage pre existing conflicts. Making programmes available to tackle alcohol and substance abuse have an important function in preventing abuse of older people. Older persons who are verbally or physically aggressive or abusive may sometimes be the source of the problem. Agitated behavior is especially associated with dementia and can influence negative interaction. Therefore, informal caregivers should receive professional support to learn how to react appropriately to such behavior and develop coping strategies (Kattakayam, 2014).

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