Review Article

# Critical review of literature on the prevalence of elder abuse in India: Sorrow of greying

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## Abstract

In Quran, Surat Al-'Isra' 17:23-24 states “if a person is reaching towards late adulthood alone or with their partner, shouldn't be ill-treated, abused, offended but supposed to be served with affection, respect, generosity, and courtesy”. Elderly abusing increases but in a hidden way. Elderly abuse is a highly traumatic phenomenon which tormented and arising with severe problems like physical injury, emotional and mental problems, etc. which affects the elderly people life adversely. Most often the victim of elderly abuse did not report it due to family privacy and reputation. It is prevailing in all kinds of socio-economic groups, religious community, and gets across urban-rural areas. This study is performed with a literature search from Google, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Springer, PubMed correlated to elder abuse in India whether in-home, community or institutions. A paper published after 2000 to 2019 was found using the keywords: elder abuse in India, elderly problems, elder mistreatment, abuse against the elder, physical and social abuse of elderly. The literature relevant to the concerned study was reviewed published and peer-reviewed journals written in the English language. The researcher also outlook on the latest international and national reports like WHO Report, HelpAge India Report, etc. Elderly abuse results in depression, isolation, injury, neglect, and even death. There were very few empirical studies on elder abuse in India. This vulnerable group needs special attention for their protection and securing their life and well-being. It is an alarming state of public health priority. There should be an urgent need to modify social attitudes, set up separate administration for elderly peoples to report the cases. Social workers, medical workers, and gerontologists, and other administrators work in collaboration for quick and strong implementation of effective practices for them..

**Keywords:** Elderly abuse, Well-being, Victim, Physical and Mental Problems

## Introduction

It is always the impression that elder abuse occurred only in developed countries. But due to modernization and urbanization now it can be acknowledged that it is prevailing in India with extensive features. The joint family system is the major source of integrating the different ages in one place. Now been broken down in the nuclear family system. Although previously where the elders gain respect and support with dignityhas now been challenged by the younger generation's capabilities and strange behavior towards them. Such behavior seems to be

abnormal for elders but cannot be identified (Abira Basu, 2008).

In this 21st century, it can easily observe the growing concern for an elderly safe future. As the elderly population increases with a rapid rate proportional to decreasing of the joint family system. Due to insufficient space in houses, the elderly suffer from psychological stress like lack of social interaction. Even from a generation gap which leads to isolation, lack of communication, and depression. Elderly abuse can be related to intentional action which can cause suffering and pain such as caretaker fails to fulfill the basic demands & needs and safe living surroundings of the elderly. Type of abuse includes physical abuse, mental abuse, financial abuse, and sexual abuse(Miri Cohen et al., 2006).

Origin:

As the population is rapidly growing across the globe, elderly abuse incidents taking place rapidly (Rajini Sooryanarayana, 2013). Initially, in the 1970s the elder abuse came in light in the United Kingdom where the term "granny battering" was coined but the United States was first to explore the studies which carry out elder abuse & neglect(Aravanis S.C et al., 1993).

The topic "elder abuse" or "elder mistreatment" has gained prominence only recently. Discovering the child abuse in the 1960s and marital violence in 1970s, the elder abuse takes place the final form of violence to receive societal attention (R S Wolf, 1989). Ill-treated or abuse are of many types like physical abuse, verbal abuse & social abuse increasing in society.

Elderly Abuse:

A definition of elder abuse is: *"the reoccurrence of inappropriate actions in any relationship that contain high expectation can lead to great distress among elders and disrupts their well-being and rights"*(Working Group on Elder Abuse, 2002).

Types of Elder Abuse:

This can occur in varied forms that could be the result of deliberate intent, negligence, or ignorance. The person can experience more than one form of abuse at a time. According to National Centre for the Protection of Older People types of elder mistreatment include:

1. Physical Abuse: Physical abuse has been defined as the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain, or impairment. Physical abuse may include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, and inappropriate restraint.

2. Psychological Abuse: Psychological or emotional abuse may include the persistent use of threats, humiliation, bullying, intimidation, isolation, swearing, and other verbal conduct that results in mental or physical distress.

3. Financial Abuse: Financial or material abuse has been defined as the unauthorized and improper use of funds, property, or any resources of an older person. This may include theft, coercion, fraud, misuse of power of attorney, and also not contributing to household costs where this was previously agreed.

4. Sexual Abuse: It refers to an act to which an older person has not or could not consent, including talking to or touching sexually.

5. Neglect: Neglect refers to the repeated deprivation of assistance needed by an older person for important activities of daily living. This may include ignoring or refusing to help with physical care needs, failing to provide access to appropriate health services, or withholding necessities such as adequate nutrition and heating.

6. Discriminatory Abuse: Discriminatory abuse may include racism, ageism, discrimination based on disability, other forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.

7. Institutional Abuse: Institutional abuse may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals, and any other in-patient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines, and inadequate responses to complex needs.

Elder Abuse at Global level:

The world population is aged 60 and above will be increased twofold from 900 million in 2015 to 2 billion in 2050. With the rapid increase in the aging population, many developed and developing countries experienced elder abuse. During previous years 1 in 6 elderly people encounter some form of abuse in community settings(World Health Organization, 2018). Mistreatment has occurred in various settings like a home or institutional care system, nursing & staff. While sometimes it can be seen that the elder suffered from self-neglect in which the elder is boththe perpetrator and the victim (Hilary Buri et al., 2006).

In 1993, Gerry Bennett states that unbiased studies suggested the correlation between a high level of dependency on elder and abuse by upholder. Deviation from normal behavior towards the elderly causes mistreatment. Factor be like career stress, social isolation, intergenerational violence, and reversal dependency. It is mostly seen that victim has limited social interaction. In such cases, financial abuse occurred to both the sexes but elderly women were become the worst victim of this problem. Usually, female's elderly have a lack of social contacts and networks and they cannot inform others in their support to avail services for them.

According to Jing-JyWang (2006) which states that increasing health care facilities for elders can cause serious consequences by decreasing the productivity of family support who provides care to them. Care-giving in itself can turn into abuse while dealing with elderly patients suffering from a cognitive problem which creates a lot of burden and stress to the care-givers. Direct effects of abuse can be range from an intense emotional state like anger, sorrow, dissatisfaction, distress, violence, being frightened, injury, to prevent further abuse and carry more mental problems(Elsie Yan, 2001).

Elderly Status in India:

Growing concern for the elderly can be easily visible not only in India but around the globe. The statistic showed that the increasing population of elderly aged 60 and above from 20 million in 1951 to 72 million in 2001. According to Census 2011, 8 percent of the total population i.e. in absolute number 97.24 million are now aged 60 and above. This frequency will enlarge with 18% by 2025. As per the 2011 Census data the elderly population increase four times from 1961 to 2011. Because of this growing circumstances, the 21$^{st}$ century may be called upon “Era of Population Ageing” (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011).

Status of Elderly Abuse in India:

Due to technical advancement and enhancement in health facilities in India, the rate of growth of the elderly population is 3.09 percent greater than as compared to the general population of 1.9 percent (Group for Economic & Social Studies, 2009). With increasing the aging population alongside its associated problems also emerged rapidly. Earlier old age called upon the golden phase of life where not certainly have huge responsibility or any liability but seeking comfort for the rest of their life from their children(Sreedhanya Hari Thekkedath, 2009). But now this becomes greater challenged for the generation to uphold their older parents. Protecting and caring become a burden for them. As the latest report of HelpAge India 2019, it clearly shows that 15

percent of caregivers perceive the severe burden of caring for their elder. Even S.I rudaya Rajan 2007 stated that caring for the elderly was not equally deal with the family members.

The study was conducted by HelpAge India, 2011 in twelve major cities to reveal about the type of abuse which states that around 60% verbally abuse, 48% physically abuse, 37% emotionally abuse, 35% financially abuse and 20% of them feel self-neglect in the family as well as in society. While some studies suggested the severe effects of such abuse like isolation and neglect, lack of social support, loss of dignity and respect, insecurity; still not marked as abuse (Shubha Soneja, 2011). While 50% of elder experienced abuse surveys conducted by HelpAge India, 2014.

Regarding the conceptualizing of elder abuse Prakash, 2003 extracts some information from the elderly which stated as elderly women were more likely to abuse as compared to elderly men because of their throughout dependency since marriage till widow which will become a vulnerability. Furthermore, those who suffer from physical abuse are more prone to psychological problems like suicidal tendency, depression and also affects overall health like a greater chance for acquiring disability (Nidhi Gupta, 2015; Briana Anisko, 2009).The lack of awareness of legal rights, illiteracy, negligible awareness about economic rights leads to became elderly women more vulnerable. Specifically, those who belong to the poor class of society in which if they tend to allow their partner to abuse then it will probably continue till old age. Not only family but in an institution setting elder abuse is also prevailing. Mistreatment or illegal exploitation, infliction of pain & injury, verbal abuse, and sexual abuse are the most common form of abuse. As there was no specific provision for older women but now it is necessary to protect their rights by law and make them more empower through sensitization and awareness (Gita Shah et al., 1995; Srinivas & B. Vijayalakshmi, 2001; Asharaf, 2005; Ravneet Kaur, 2008; Srinivasan Chokkanathan, 2008)

With increasing in number, the crime rate was also increased. According to National Crime Records Bureau, 2010 stated that around 3,833 cases of crime against the elderly reported from 2001 to 2010 in which about 84.77% reported for murder and 15.22% for molestation, ill-treatment, and abduction. Today the cases reported a crime against the elderly is increasing across the globe. Moreover, the Group for Economic & Social Studies, 2009 surveyed metropolitan cities to report the type of crime committed against the elderly. Many studies reported the types of crime to be like burglary, harassment, torture, kidnapping, cheating, economic crime, murder, theft; also with this increases of crime the fear of crime among elderly can be easily visible (HelpAge India, A report on Elder Abuse and Crime in India, 2011).

Need for the review:

Prerequisite in-depth and extensive literature scrutiny is necessary to find the research gap on elder abuse in India and working out the best implementation strategy.

Although there are little comprehensive research and lack of published data on the elder abuse (Desai K.G. et al., 1993; Indira Jai Prakash, 2001; Sujatha, 2007), some recent studies have focused on the elder abuse on their human rights violations, restlessness, critical conditions and other related crisis in family, community and institution settings. As this is a known fact that elder abuse prevailing in society but it remains the tip of the iceberg. It is hard to identifying the form of abuse because most of them are inter-connected (Gita Shah et al., 1995). So, a critical appraisal of the available studies is much needed to find out the gap.

Recent researches on elder abuse have concentrated on the types of abuse but unsuccessful to attempt on the later consequence and factors of such abuse. This review will help in understanding the situation and problems of the elderly on abuse. It is a problem that manifests itself in many forms on a societal,

governmental, and international level. At the same time, it is a humanitarian and moral issue, a security issue, a development issue, and to a growing extent, it is an issue of population, environmental and natural resources.

Objectives:

- To study the existing literature on elderly abuse in India.
- To understand the existing conditions of elders in India.
- To examine the research gap of the existing literature.

Methodology:

This study is performed a literature search with Google, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Springer, BioMed Central, Wiley, Pub Med related to elderly abuse in India published after 2000 were found using the keywords elderly abuse, elderly, mistreatment, abuse against the elderly, elderly victim, elderly abuse and neglect. The literature relevant to the concerned study was reviewed according to the following: However, some earlier seminal articles were also included. The literature relevant to the concerned study were reviewed according to the following:

Inclusion criteria:

- Published and written in the English language
- Peer-reviewed journals

Exclusion criteria:

- Reports of newspaper
- Studies without scientific structure

A critical review of the selected paper:

A critical review of the selected paper is presented in the following Table 1. with the information of authors, title, source, data sources, and methodology, and last two columns are comprising some of the main findings of the particular research and critique.

Table 1.

| S.No. | Author/Topic | Data Source/ Methodology | Findings | Summaries/Critique |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Gupta, N. (2016). Development, elder abuse and quality of life: Older women in urban India. | A cross-sectional survey conducted in the suburbs of Mumbai with 460 older women sample size selected randomly by disproportionate stratified sampling. | Family members are the main perpetrators for such a high incidence of elder abuse. | The study tries to gather information about elder abuse in all levels of classes.<br>Elderly women suffer more abuse and it shows a low quality of life.<br>The study shows elder women abuse in the poor and higher class group. |
| 2. | Gaikwad, V., Sudeepa, D., & Kumar, M. S. (2011). A community-based study on elder abuse and depression in Bangalore rural. | A pre-tested questionnaire was used to interview 127 elder persons in Bangalore rural area selected through systematic random sampling. | It was reported that 40.94% were elder abuse followed by 18.89% physical abuse, 37.79% psychological abuse, and 30.71% of financial abuse. | The method used to gather data about elder abuse is insufficient.<br>In the study elder abuse leads to depression stated but other depression associated factors were missing. |

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| 3. | Manoj, H. R., & Pradeep, B. S. (2017). Elder Abuse-The need for Social Work Intervention. | The study was exploratory having a mixed research approach. Total of 112 elderly respondents involved by multistage random sampling techniques in the district of Karnataka. | Physical abuse occurring more in lower strata as compared to middle or high-income groups. Emotional abuse is seen to be more prevalent in the upper and middle-income groups. Financial abuse prevails in all income groups. | Not proper formula or reason for the selection of sample size has been used in the study.<br>No discussion on the statistical techniques was given in the study. |
| 4. | Kumar, P., &Patra, S. (2019). A study on elder abuse in an urban resettlement colony of Delhi. | The cross-sectional study conducted in urban east Delhi. Total of 125 elderly respondents interviewed by pretested semi-structured questionnaire. | 9.6% ofthe elderly experienced abuse in the form of verbal abuse, neglect, physical and financial abuse. | Elder abuse could not have explored in-depth as this study is quantitative.As the study performed in resettlement urban area then it could not generalize to other parts of Delhi.The study could not explain the causal risk factors of abuse in elders. |
| 5. | Mawar, S., Koul, P., Das, S., & Gupta, S. (2018). Association of physical problems and depression with elder abuse in an urban community of North India. | The study was conducted with 222 elders in the urban community of Delhi. Used different scalesto assessed elder abuse. | The study reveals that elder women suffer more abuse than elder men. 24.3% suffer from all types of abuse, also another factor like depression and alcohol consumption associated with elder abuse. | This study performed in the resettlement of south Delhi urban area that it could not generalize to other parts of Delhi.<br>The study does not explore the in-depth physical problems in the elderly due to abuse. |
| 6. | Kaur, J., Kaur, J., & Sujata, N. (2015). Comparative study on perceived abuse andsocial neglect among rural and urban geriatric population. | The study conducted in the rural and urban areas of district Ludhiana. 100 sample size taken from each area by cluster sampling and data collected through the method of interview. | The study revealed more physical abuse in a rural area while psychological abuse, financial abuse & social neglect prevails in an urban area. | The study has an unequal size of subsets in its sample which may bias the result.<br>The study didn't explore the in-depth causes of abuse.<br>No correlation was seen with education and elder abuse. |
| 7. | Amala Mathew, Sobha B Nair(2017). Theoretical Perspectives on Elder Abuse: A Framework Analysisfor Abused Elderly in Kerala. | The study is descriptive. Using simple random sampling in 3 districts of Kerala collected data from 256 elders. | Through a theoretical perspective, the study focuses on increasing cases of elderly abuse and depicts factors i.e. age and dependency of elderly & source of abuse. | As the study's major findings based on secondary literature which lacks the reasons and factors for abuse.Not proper formula or reason for the selection of sample size has been used.The study misses findings from primary data. |
| 8. | Mattoo, K. A., Shalabh, K., & Khan, A. (2010). Geriatric forensics: A dentist's perspective and contribution to | 300 patients involved in the study in which 238 males & 62 females interviewed through a questionnaire. | The study reveals that 40% of elders suffer from neglect in one way or the other. | The reason for the selection of sample size was not mentioned in the study.<br>No proper discussion on statistical techniques was |

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| | identifyingthe existence of elder abuse among his patients. | | | statistical techniques was given in the study.<br>The study gathered evidence and reflects the causes of abuse and determining health effects also. |
| 9. | Saikia, A. M., Mahanta, N., Mahanta, A., Deka, A. J., &Kakati, A. (2015). Prevalence and risk factors of abuse among community-dwelling elderly of Guwahati City, Assam. | The study was conducted in Guwahati city in which 10wards selected randomly from that 40 elderly selected for interview. To collect data predesigned & pretested schedule included. | The prevalence of abuse was found at 9.31%. Neglect is most common in all. | This study performed in Guwahati city in an urban area in home-settings that it could not generalize to other parts of Assam.<br>The study does not explore the in-depth health problems in the elderly due to abuse.<br>The unequal distribution of both sexes in sample size may bias the result. |
| 10. | Nisha, C., Manjaly, S., Kiran, P., Mathew, B., &Kasturi, A. (2016). Study on elder abuse and neglect among patients in a medical college hospital, Bangalore, India. | The study was descriptive. In total 200 elderly patients selected from urban & rural hospitals, Bangalore. For the interview, the structured questionnaire prepared for them to assess elder abuse. | The prevalence of elder abuse was 16%. Also, the study reveals that multiple forms of abuse experienced by an elder. | The study didn't mention the proper formula for sample size and methodology adopted.<br>As the study is cross-sectional so it reveals association but not causal relations.<br>The results cannot be generalized to the residing of elderly people in an institutional setting.<br>The study deals with physical, verbal, and financial abuse but another kind of abuse like social abuse and self-neglect is missed. |
| 11. | Vardhan, R. (2017). Elder abuse and elder victimization: a sociological analysis. | Through purposive sampling, 100 elderly were selected for interview. To collect the data interview schedule method used. | The study reveals that about 2/5$^{th}$ of the respondent suffers from abuse where the majority of abuse was seen among elderly female. | The study didn't mention the types of elder abuse.<br>No discussion on the statistical techniques was given in the study.<br>Most of the findings generalized by theoretical perspective rather than the practical aspect. |

Practical Implications

The Elderly somehow adjust to the situation they are facing throughout their lives. It became essential not only for the health professional but for all the citizens to look after their lives which they suffering from such conditions. It is now foremost important for the elderly to aware of their rights, legal actions and to secure themselves from such instances. Education can improve one's economical chances and give oneself a more prominent status to decide to reduce potential abuse. Those policies which enhance education could help diminish elder abuse in India.

As a social worker perspective, the elderly should advocate to manage the crisis, discuss with family and relatives, counsel them to deal with the abuse situation, to reach Senior Citizen's Association to help and guide them when they confronted with misuse, compelling and legitimate usage of the laws by the law authorizing offices viz. police and legal advisors', and Police enlisting the objection with no deferrals and badgering,strategies for elderly to give them training for reducing abuse in India.The social worker helps their families by social affairs data about the variety of administrations accessible to them, planning care across different wellbeing frameworks, encouraging family support, and offering direct assistance. Geriatric social work intercessions are aimed at improving nobility, self-assurance, individual satisfaction, personal satisfaction, ideal working, and guaranteeing the least prohibitive living condition.Youth awareness program should be enhanced regarding elderly abuse so as this generation sensitized about the seriousness of the issue. Elder should be free to talk about themselves to their family member, relatives, neighbor, friends, and society. Other measures should also be taken as a part of the government asthe safety and security of elders in public places, provide transport and hospital facilities free of cost, separate queue for them, provide pension to all elder aged 60 and above, provide them free legal advisor and lawyer in terms of crisis.Media could playa significant role in controlling the situation by creating awareness about elder abuse, give a strong voiceamong individuals through notices, sorting out open classes, and shows on the issues of the older with the goal that individuals should have a positive attitude towards elders and their interests. Indian government should focus on different domains of elder-friendly communities to minimize the difficulties of aged people (Rafi & Saif, 2020)

## Conclusion

Studies depict the traumatic life experiences and existing situation of an elder in Indian society. The issues of elders unable to resolve until their vital necessity and demands for nourishment, protection, health care along with security were not met. Most of them are experiencing a void life with no familial support. There should need to create an environment where the elder's people live with peace and dignified life, where positive aging attitude encouraged among generation and giving full rights to free-living from ill-treatment and give them a suitable environment to enjoy and engage them in societal and commercial activities(World Health Organization).

At present, there were Article 41 and 46 of the Constitution for the rights of older in terms of sickness, unemployment, social injustice, and all form of exploitation. But this is not enough for such a huge population. For the sake of their security, it should be emphasized to enhance the strength of self-reliance and to trackthe actions of their kinsfolk. There should be some support system from society as well from government officials.

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