

## EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ELDERLY IN DISTRICT GUJRAT, PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*The current qualitative study explored the nature of elder abuse in District Gujrat. The study aimed to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of elderly as well as the type of elder abuse. Purposive sampling was used to approach 13 respondents (elderly males and females). Their age was 60 and above. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect the data. An interview guide was used for semi-structured interview which was prepared after literature review and theories of violence. Thematic analysis was done through all transcribed data of interviews. Major themes emerged psychological abuse and financial abuse. However, presence of neglect and physical abuse has also been found. The findings showed that most of the respondents who had faced one type of abuse had faced other form of abuse too. Findings are the contributing source in community awareness programs.*

**Keywords:** Elder abuse, Psychological abuse, Financial Abuse, Neglect, Physical Abuse

### INTRODUCTION

Ageing of the population is one of the most important demographic facts that came to the foreground in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the whole world, people live longer having high life expectancy, decreased birth rates, controlled fertility, and consequently, the elderly population increases.

Several studies are being conducted on the effects of ageing of population as well as assessments on the effects of elderly taking place on the socio-economic structure. Developed countries are doing efforts to ensure that elderly people continue their lives without being detached from social life, and can gain importance. Pakistan is one of those countries having maximum number of demographic dividend.

International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse defines elder abuse as, "Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person." It can take any form, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse with long lasting consequences (INPEA, 2002).

The National Centre on Elder Abuse, USA defines seven different types of elder abuse: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; financial exploitation; neglect; abandonment; and self-neglect.

- a. Use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment.
- b. Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind with an elderly person.
- c. Emotionally abuse like infliction of anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or non-verbal acts.
- d. Financial/material exploitation, illegal or improper use of an elder's funds, property, or assets.
- e. Neglect, refusal, or failure, to fulfill any part of a person's obligations or duties to an elderly person.
- f. Abandonment that is desertion of an elderly person by an individual who has physical custody of the elder or by a person who has assumed responsibility for providing care to the elder.
- g. Self-neglect that is behaviors of an elderly person that threaten the elder's health or safety.

The number of elderly (60+) people was 5.7 million in 1981. The number of elderly population was 7.2 million in 1998 census. The current demographic profile of Pakistan shows the total population as 187 million among which the elderly population over 65 years of age constitutes almost 4.2%. The

overall population pyramid is broader in the middle with the highest figures (58%) being from 15-64 years. It is estimated that it will increase up to 16% by 2050 (PDP, 2011).

In developing countries like Pakistan where there are already scarce resources and there is only little number of elderly are getting benefits from government in the form of pension etc. that is just limited to government employed. Ageing is a universal phenomenon occurring in every individual's life with the passage of time. In the past ageing was not considered as a social problem. As the structure of family changes from joint and extended to nuclear family, people become busier in their personal life. They do not have enough time to spend with their parents that may cause older people to feel loneliness or other problems. Ageing brings a number of problems for the older people in their life in various sphere of life.

There are no reliable data in Pakistan on the prevalence and incidence of elder abuse and neglect. In fact, it is hidden by older people, their families and communities to a large extent. Elder abuse and neglect are difficult to quantify as these occur in the privacy of the home, institutions and reporting systems for elder abuse are almost absent in the country. There is no proper way to report mistreatment, neglect or abuse of older people in Pakistan unlike in some western countries. Therefore, it is important to get statistics on the prevalence of elder abuse not only in domestic settings but also in society.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Apratto Júnior (2011) investigated the "Magnitude and Characteristics of Violence against the Elderly by Trusted People at Ilha Da Conceição, Niterói--RJ Registered at the Family Health Program". It included reports of 43% at least one episode of psychological violence. Physical violence was reported by 9.6% of the interviewed, 6.1% reported serious physical violence in this period. The prevalence of different modalities of violence was higher among the youngest individuals, with higher solidarity, among those who had one of the pathologies that characterize the elderly as having a vulnerability (depression and/or urinary incontinence/fecal and/or diabetes and/or rheumatism) and those living with the greatest number of individuals.

Clancy (2011) et al., conducted a study on "National Profiling of Elder Abuse Referrals in Ireland". The objectives of the study were to report the rate of referrals of elder abuse, patterns of elder abuse and outcomes of interventions related to a dedicated elder abuse service in the absence of mandatory reporting. The researchers concluded that the number of reported cases of abuse in Ireland indicates an under-reporting of elder abuse. The classification of almost half of the cases as inconclusive was a stimulus to further analysis and research, as well as for revision of classification and follow-up procedures. The provision of services to a wide range of referrals demonstrated a therapeutic added benefit of specialist elder abuse services. The national database on elder abuse referrals provides valuable insight into patterns of elder abuse and the nature of classification and response. The pooling of such data between European states would allow for helpful comparison in building research and services in elder abuse.

Comijs et al., (2009) carried out a research on "Elder Abuse in the Community: Prevalence and Consequences". The results showed that 1-year prevalence of elder abuse was 5.6%. The prevalence of the various types of elder abuse was: verbal aggression 3.2%, physical aggression 1.2%, financial mistreatment 1.4%, and neglect 0.2%. Most of the victims reported emotional reactions immediately after the abuse.

Amstadter et al., (2010) conducted a study on "Prevalence and Correlates of Elder Mistreatment in South Carolina: The South Carolina Elder Mistreatment Study in Virginia". The purpose of this study was to derive prevalence estimates for elder mistreatment (emotional, physical, sexual, neglectful, and financial mistreatment of older adults. Prevalence for mistreatment types (since age 60) were 12.9% emotional, 2.1% physical, 0.3% sexual, 5.4% potential neglect, and 6.6% financial exploitation by family member. One in 10 participants reported emotional, physical, sexual, or neglectful mistreatment within the past year, and 2 in 10 reported mistreatment since age 60.

Kissal and Beser (2000) investigated the prevalence of abuse and neglect of the elderly aged 65 years and older, living with their relative in a primary health care center area and affecting factors. A

descriptive study included 331 people aged 65 years. The most frequent type of abuse was psychological abuse and the least frequent was sexual abuse. Female gender, low education levels, living with spouses and children, and perception of familial relationships as average or below average significantly increased abuse. The nurses providing primary health care should be able to identify and observe the elderly at risk of abuse and conduct programs preventing abuse.

Friedman et al., (2011) conducted study to characterize the severity and outcome of traumatic injuries suffered by victims of elder abuse. They described the characteristics of the perpetrators and identified risk factors associated with severe traumatic elder abuse. This study concluded that it was the first clinical case-control study detailing clinical outcomes and evaluating risk factors of persons suffering severe physical abuse. Of elderly trauma victims, those who were physically abused had more-severe injuries than their non-abused counterparts.

Amstadter (2011) et al. studied the Perpetrator and incident characteristics in regard to incidents of emotional, physical, and sexual mistreatment of older adults (age 60+) in a national sample of older men and women by the researchers. Approximately one in ten adults reported at least one form of mistreatment, and the majority of incidents were not reported to authorities. Perpetrators of physical mistreatment against men had more "pathological" characteristics compared to perpetrators of physical mistreatment against women.

Luo and Waite (2007) concluded in their study that older adults with fewer psychosocial resources or more psychosocial deficits seemed to be more vulnerable to mistreatment. Mistreatment seemed to be particularly detrimental to psychological well-being for elderly people.

De Queiroz (2001) et al., conducted a research on "Factors Potentially Associated to Domestic Negligence among Elders Assisted in Home Assistance Program". Among the various forms of abuse, one of the less known and denounced was the domestic negligence. As it occurs mostly inside family and nursing homes, it was hardly identified.

Lori Post et al., (2005) studied "Elder Abuse in Long-Term Care: Types, Patterns, and Risk Factors in USA". Researchers computed occurrence rates and conditional occurrence rates for each of six abuse types: physical, caretaking, verbal, emotional, neglect, and material. Among older adults, who had experienced at least one type of abuse, more than half (51.4%) had experienced another type of abuse too. Physical functioning problems, activities of daily living limitations, and behavioral problems were significant risk factors for at least three types of abuse and were significant for multiple abuse types.

Laumann et al., (2008) conducted a research on "Elder Mistreatment in the United States". In all, 9% of older adults reported verbal mistreatment, 3.5% financial mistreatment, and 0.2% physical mistreatment by a family member. Odds of verbal mistreatment were higher for women and those with physical vulnerabilities and were lower for Latinos than for Whites. Odds of financial mistreatment were higher for African Americans and lower for Latinos than for Whites and were lower for those with a spouse or romantic partner than for those without partners. Few older adults report mistreatment by family members, with older adults quite insulated from physical mistreatment.

Elsie Yan and Catherine so-Kum tang (2009) conducted a research on "Prevalence and Psychological Impact of Chinese Elder Abuse". Results indicated prevalence rates of 2% for physical abuse and 20.8% for verbal abuse. Data from the general health questionnaire showed that abused elders, as compared with non-abused elders, scored significantly higher on overall psychological distress. Abused participants were also significantly more dependent on their caregivers than non-abused participants.

Tatara (1993) conducted a research on "Understanding the Nature and Scope of Domestic Elder Abuse with the Use of State Aggregate Data: Findings revealed a substantial increase in the number of reports of elder maltreatment in domestic settings. Neglect by others, the most frequent type of elder maltreatment, accounted for nearly half of all substantiated reports. Physical abuse, the second most frequent type of elder maltreatment, accounted for about 20 percent of all substantiated reports. Many States had more difficulty providing data on perpetrators than victims of elder abuse. Nonetheless, most abusers were males, and two-thirds of victims were females. Elderly people 85 years of age and older appeared to be the most vulnerable age group.

Compton, Flanagan and Gregg (1998) conducted research on “Elder Abuse in People with Dementia in Northern Ireland: The results showed that Abuse was elicited in 14 (37%) cases; four (10.5%) of physical and 13 (34%) of verbal abuse. No cases of abuse by neglect were detected.

So it is concluded that elderly are facing different kinds of abuse all over the world. There are some factors that are significantly affecting elderly such as isolation, dependency of elderly and lack of resources etc. As according to the public health agency of Canada 1994, ageism; increased vulnerability; isolation; a history of spousal abuse; and intergenerational dynamics are some factors that contribute to the likelihood of an older person being abused. It has also been identified that there is different types of elder abuse present across the world which are physical, sexual psychological and financial. This study is the preliminary in way to explore the elder abuse in the city of Gujrat.

### OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To determine the socio-demographic characteristics of elderly.
- b. To identify the nature of elder abuse.

### Research Question

What are the socio-demographic characteristics of elderly living in District Gujrat, Pakistan and what is the nature of elder abuse?

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The current qualitative study focused on elder abuse. This issue had not been investigated much and there was no mandatory mechanism to report neglect or abuse of older person. In addition to it, there was no reliable data on elder abuse in District Gujrat. Sampling frame was not available to draw sample, therefore, researcher used purposive sampling to collect data. The respondents were chosen on the basis of some characteristics like (a) they must be at the age of 60 or over (b) they must be victims of abuse. Sample included 13 elderly males and females residing in District Gujrat. . Interview schedule was prepared to conduct semi-structured interviews to collect information from the respondents.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table No. 1: Age of the Respondents				Table No. 2: Marital Status of the Respondents			
Age	Male	Female	Total	Marital Status	Male	Female	Total
60-69	3	3	6	Married	1	0	1
70-79	1	2	3	Separated	0	1	1
80-89 <sup>+</sup>	3	1	4	Spouse dead	5	6	11

  

Table No. 3: Family structure of the Respondents				Table No. 4: Educational Attainment of the Respondents			
Family Structure	Male	Female	Total	Education	Male	Female	Total
Joint	2	2	4	Uneducated	3	5	8
Extended	2	0	2	Primary	0	1	1
Nuclear	2	2	4	Matriculation	3	0	3
Living alone	1	2	3	Intermediate or above	1	0	1

Table No. 5: Income Resources of the Respondents

Income resources	Male	Female	Total
Dependent on family	3	1	4
Dependent on others	1	3	4
Self-employed	2	1	3
Pension	1	1	2

Interviews were analyzed descriptively and thematically. The present research focused on the nature of elder abuse. Amongst total population, 46% were females and 54% were males. The age of respondents varied from 60-89 years; 84% of respondents' spouse had died; 7% were separated and 7% were living with their partner; 31% respondents were living in nuclear family and the 31% living in joint family; 23% were living alone and 15% were living in extended family. Almost 62% of respondents were un-educated; 23% studied up to matriculation; 8% were intermediate, while 8% were primary passed (This information is given in tabular form in Annexure-I).

Transcription of data was analyzed through thematic analysis which resulted into major themes: Financial Abuse, Psychological Abuse and Physical Abuse. Most of the respondents experienced more than one form of abuse at the same time.

### Financial Abuse

Most of the respondents reported (90%) that they had to face financial abuse which included theft of money and snatching of property ruthlessly. The findings reflected that females and males both were susceptible to financial abuse with slight difference between their vulnerability. Following transcriptions of different respondents indicate the nature of Financial Abuse.

One of the female respondents reported,

*"Merysarypaisyery koi thorybotyjurjandy ci o chorikr k le jandac.mainjithay vi tar diyan o kadlenda c. J main den to manakrendite o menu maranlagda c. Auladpulgandi ay k oday ma peyo v honday ne jeryona no paldayney."* (Punjabi version)

*"He (son) stole all money that I (mother) had accumulated. Wherever I put money he got from there. If I refused to give him, he used to beat me. Children disregard their parents who brought the up."* (English Translation)

Female responses indicated snatching of their few savings and even physical abuse exists when they refuse to give their money to their deviant and aggressive children. It is distressing fact for the mothers when they observe their children's threatening behaviors. They are disillusioned of their charming wishes of being cared by their children whom they brought up with care and love.

Males' responses showed that they had never faced assets stealing issue and theft of money from them. The results showed that both males and females faced financial issues of being abused but their dimensions were slightly different as women were more dependent as compared to men.

One of the male respondents said,

*"Meraybetydukanymagagtayhein. Agar meinunhein day doontumeinkhudkahan say khaon. Asioladjomujymartihaiwomjekhanykoryakhakdygi. Mje mar hi nadaligy .abhi to un komujsematlabhai"*. (Punjabi version)

*"My sons wanted to grab my shops. If I write these shops in their (sons) names, then what will I do. Sons who are used to beat me, what they would they give me to eat then? They would definitely kill me. Right now they have hidden intentions and apparently show their concern for me."* (English Translation)

It is an alarming realization for a father to be fearful of their sons' mischievous thinking and actions who want only money and property. They even beat their father and do not bother about his (father) biological needs like food. Perhaps, they are diplomate and waiting for grabbing the property.

The results of Comijs et al (2009) concluded in a research study that the prevalence of the financial mistreatment exists in the elder abuse. It is one the most reported form of elder abuse. It accompanies extreme emotional reactions immediately after the abuse. Seven of 36 victims experienced physical or financial damage as a consequence of the abuse. Overall, financial abuse is very painful for a person who needs money for his/her medicine and daily food. Financial loss accompanies emotional pain as well.

### Psychological Abuse

According to the findings of present study, the most common abuse in society was psychological abuse. Most of the respondents (85%) reported that they had experienced this abuse in which verbal abuse (passing harsh words, humiliation etc.) and calling names were very common and affecting both elderly males and females.

Amongst the respondents, one female said,

*"Menu gallankad-da c. meri ma behn koi v naechadi. Menu ni c pata ay meraputtarmerynalenjkaryga. Jadutakidapeyojenda c o inokabukr k rakhyhoya c".* (Punjabi version)

*"He (son) used to abuse not only me but my mother and sisters too. I am shocked at his verbal abuse what he indulges in. When his father was alive, he (father) used to control him (son)."* (English Translation)

Other psychological abuses like calling names, arguments, quarrelling were also present along with helplessness and hopelessness. While other forms like threatening and harassment was very mild.

### Neglect

Neglect also emerged as sub them of psychological abuse. Many respondents (80%) said that they were being neglected by their family members. Almost all of the respondents reported they were feeling loneliness as they were being ignored by their children. Few respondents reported that they feel themselves isolated from their society. They were not allowed to have communication with their friends and relatives. Mostly women were facing loneliness and isolation. It might be due to the fact that they are not allowed by their sons and daughters to move or visit outside with their friends and relatives.

Some of the respondents were living alone due to vulnerability to different kinds of abuses in domestic settings.

One female respondent said,

*"ikwarirozyawichmeinbemarpayitesargiuthna ski. Meraputtar ne menu uthayani. Main pani p k rozarakhlyateputtar ne naakhya k ma nu ik roti v de diyan".* (Punjabi version)

*"Once I felt ill and could not get up for having fast in Ramzan. My son didn't awake me although he knew that I used to fast. I took a glass of water and had fast but my son didn't bother to give me even a single piece of bread".* (English Translation)

It is the height of negligence that single bread is not offered to their parents when they need it. Most of the respondents depend on their sons for survival of their life. Their bodily as well as emotional needs are callously ignored which may result in geriatric depression. They had no income resources and forced to depend on begging and on the mercy of others for their survival.

Amongst the respondents one female said,

*"jadukujnahi khan joga Honda temahallywaly menu khan joga de denty ne nahitemangleni an. Hun kikaranjeenatehaina".* (Punjabi version)

*"When I do not have anything to eat, my neighbors give me food otherwise I begged food from them. What could I do else to survive?"* (English Translation)

A severe form of neglect has been observed in the elderly abuse where the parents are surviving like beggars even in the presence of their young sons. It is a great dilemma for elderly to suffer in silence or beg to others for their survival.

There are no norms or rules defined for elderly, so they may feel hopelessness and isolation. The results of the study of Luo and Waite showed that the vulnerability is universal in age as it is not linked with age. Furthermore lower levels of positive support, higher levels of criticism from close relationships, and feelings of social isolation were positively associated with self-reported mistreatment experience. Those who reported mistreatment experience also reported lower levels of global happiness and higher levels of psychological distress.

As Comijs et al (2009) conducted study and results showed that 1-year prevalence of elder abuse was 5.6%. The prevalence of the various types of elder abuse was: verbal aggression 3.2%, physical aggression 1.2%, financial mistreatment 1.4%, and neglect 0.2%. Most victims reported emotional reactions immediately after the abuse. Seven of 36 victims experienced physical or financial damage as a consequence of the abuse. More than 70% of the victims were able to stop the abuse, either by themselves or with the help of others.

### Physical Abuse

The results of the presents study highlighted the presence of physical abuse; approximately half of the achieved sample of respondents (60%) reported that they had faced same kind of physical abuse in which slapping, hitting and injury were very severe.

A female respondent reported,

*“onoojeri vi cheezlabdisioochukke menu mar denda ci. meraputtarmerite bra zulamkita ay. Te menu chad k v turgya ay. Main hunkithayawanjadapnioulad hi enjkary”.* (Punjabi version)

*“He used to beat me whatever he got in his hand. My son oppressed me and he left me alone. Where should I go now when my own son has left me?”* (English Translation)

Most people were suffered from these aforesaid problems. Whereas the presence of pushing, burning, fractures, scratches have also found.

One male respondent said,

*“merybety menu bohtmmardy sun. mainrondate Allah de wastydenda. Menu baryasattanlagyan. Khon v niklya. Ona no rehmkithayana c. meribivinalral k marwandi c”.* (Punjabi version)

*“My sons used to hit me off and on. I used to cry and asked them for mercy for the sake of Allah. I am injured many times and bleed too. How would they be polite with me, my wife supports them and encouraged them to hit me”.* (English Translation)

Another kind of physical abuse involves an intention to kill. It was not in severe conditions but also present in the society.

A male respondent said,

*“ek bar mje Charon ne buritamarakemery tang toot gayi or main behosh ho gya. Womjebahr hi phenk aye. Parosiyo ne mjeuthaya, huspatalpohnchaya or main theekhwa to gharaya.”* (Punjabi version)

*“Once my sons hit me badly that my leg fractured and I got fainted. They left me outside fainted. My neighbors brought me to hospital and when I recovered I came home.”* (English Translation)

It is depressing for the elderly fathers who are beaten in such a way that they are physically injured and left with no help. This is the height of callousness on the part of the sons who behave like criminals and neighbors help these elderly to visit hospital. Such sons are devoid of emotions and realizations. They are not less than an insane person. Physical abuse was more seen in elderly males.

The study of Freidman et al. (2011) showed that forty-one cases of elder abuse resulting in severe traumatic injury were identified. In this study, 85% of the perpetrators were family members or intimate partners. The study of Amstadter et al. (2010) revealed that approximately one in ten adults

reported at least one form of mistreatment, and the majority of incidents were not reported to authorities. Perpetrators of physical mistreatment against men had more "pathological" characteristics compared to perpetrators of physical mistreatment against women.

The study of Lori Post et al. (2005) stated that among older adults, who had experienced at least one type of abuse, more than half (51.4%) had experienced another type of abuse too. Physical functioning problems, activities of daily living limitations, and behavioral problems were significant risk factors for at least three types of abuse and were significant for multiple abuse types.

## CONCLUSION

Elder abuse in any form of mistreatment is a social problem and raises many ethical, cultural and psychological questions. It has challenged the role of culture in defining family's responsibility, society's obligation for its members and norms for the elderly.

The researcher concludes that elder abuse is present in the society of Gujrat, which has been reported in different forms like psychological, financial abuse as well as physical abuse. But people are reluctant to report mistreatment as there is no proper way to report it. They are helpless in this regard as there is no other source of dependence as well. Elderly have no reliable source for survival and help. They are just counting the days of their life. This may further contribute to the geriatric depression and anxiety which may affect the quality of the life of elderly people. Therefore, this critical phenomenon needs proper attention from the researchers as well as government for its management to enhance the quality of life of the elderly.

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