

ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OLD AGE ADULTS IN THE FAMILY

AUTHOR – PRIYASHA, STUDENT AT AMITY LAW SCHOOL, AMITY UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence against elderly individuals within the family context constitutes a grave violation of fundamental rights, subjecting older adults to physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse. This abuse occurs in various forms and poses significant legal, social, and psychological challenges for victims, exacerbating their vulnerability and undermining their overall well-being. It is estimated that approximately one in six individuals aged 60 years and older experiences some form of abuse within the family. Moreover, the impact of such abuse is profound, severely affecting the health, dignity, and quality of the life of elderly individuals.

The objective of this research is to critically examine gaps and challenges faced in national legal frameworks that aim to address domestic violence against older adults in the family.

This paper also evaluates the effectiveness of existing legal remedies designed to protect older adults, such as restraining orders, guardianship provisions, and elder protection services. It explores the challenges elderly victims face in accessing justice, including fear of retaliation, social isolation, and cognitive impairments that hinder their ability to report abuse. These barriers further complicate the enforcement of legal protections and remedies.

In conclusion, this study advocates for comprehensive legal reforms aimed at enhancing protections for older adults. It emphasizes the need for a more robust and coordinated response through inter-agency collaboration, ensuring that elder abuse is more effectively prevented, addressed, and prosecuted. Such reforms would not only guarantee the protection of older adults within family environment but also improve their access to justice and uphold their fundamental rights.

Introduction

India is renowned to having one of the oldest civilizations. Indian culture places a high value on regard and respect for elders. But unfortunately, in today's day adults are busy to adapting modern life and culture they are focusing on built their career in this busy life and neglecting their elders and treated as a burden. Old age people are dependent on their families for support and requirements, making them one of the most vulnerable members of society.

domestic violence in old age adults is pervasive issue in our society specially in India. it estimated that 1% in 6% old age adults are suffered from domestic violence. Over the age group of 60 years are victim but we are still unaware from the truth because there are only few complain file against domestic violence is reported here some time victim faced fear of of society affection, due to family pressure and some time because of lack of unawareness of their rights. In India, this frequently takes in physical, emotional, verbal, financial and sometimes even sexual abuse, are conduct in family by close relatives - like sons or

daughters-in-law and the like—to whom the elderly person concerned is dependent for care and support. according to the surveyed 40% of women 5reported the main perpetrators as their son, while 31% of women pointed out their relatives and 27% their daughters-in-law¹⁴².

Research Questions

1. Why do countless senior citizens refrain from voicing the abuse or mistreatment they face from their family members?
2. Does being part of an extended family or a small family influence the susceptibility of an older individual to mistreatment?
3. Do the regulations intended to safeguard elderly individuals in India such as the 2007 Maintenance and Welfare Act truly assist them in practical situations?
4. In what ways does domestic abuse impact the mental and physical well-being of an older adult as time progresses?
5. What actions can local communities and decision-makers take to prevent elder mistreatment from occurring in the first place?

Underreported and Unreliable Data

older mistreatment, often referred to as elder abuse, represents a widespread and intricate problem that encompasses multiple forms of harm, each possessing its unique traits and repercussions. The abuse of older individuals frequently transpires within family dynamics or caregiving environments, where trust and dependence can increase the risk of mistreatment. Such abuse can profoundly impact the overall physical, emotional, and psychological health of seniors. Consequences may include reduced life quality, social withdrawal, bodily injuries, and lasting health issues. Furthermore, elder mistreatment is commonly underreported, underscoring the importance of raising awareness and

comprehending its diverse manifestations. Key categories of elder mistreatment comprise physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, and neglect.

1. Physical Mistreatment

Physical mistreatment encompasses any act of aggression or violence directed toward an elderly individual that results in bodily harm or injury. This encompasses actions like hitting, slapping, shoving, shaking, or restraining older adults. In severe situations, it may even involve the use of weapons or significant force. Frequently, physical abuse is not confined to apparent injuries but can also cause internal harm, including fractures, bruises, or concussions. Alongside visible physical damage, seniors who face physical abuse may endure psychological trauma linked to their experiences. Elderly individuals can suffer from physical abuse in various environments, such as at home, within nursing facilities, or even during hospital visits. Caregivers might resort to violent behaviour when they feel frustrated, overwhelmed, or are dealing with their own personal issues as a method of exercising control. Older adults may become targets of physical mistreatment because they cannot defend themselves due to cognitive decline or mobility impairments, which further intensifies their vulnerability. The repercussions of physical mistreatment can be extensive, often resulting in chronic health conditions, erosion of independence, or even fatality. Additionally, such abuse can erode the trust that older individuals have in their caregivers, causing them to hesitate in seeking assistance when faced with danger.

2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse, sometimes termed psychological abuse, entails causing emotional pain or distress through verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, or social isolation. The intent is typically to belittle the elderly person, manipulate their actions, or inflict emotional suffering. Various forms of emotional abuse encompass name-calling, embarrassment,

¹⁴² “16 per Cent Older Women in India Suffer Abuse, Finds Survey | Life-Style News - The Indian Express.”

intimidation, placing blame, and making false allegations. The abuser may further isolate the elderly individual from their support networks, including friends, relatives, and community connections, as a method of exerting additional control.

The subtle nature of emotional abuse makes it particularly concerning since its impact is not always apparent. In contrast to physical mistreatment, emotional abuse typically does not leave tangible scars, yet it may carry lasting psychological repercussions. The affected elderly individual might endure feelings of worthlessness, depression, anxiety, helplessness, and fear. Furthermore, emotional abuse can heighten the likelihood of physical health problems and accelerate the deterioration of mental health, particularly among those already experiencing conditions like dementia or Alzheimer's disease. In numerous instances, emotional abuse remains unnoticed because it requires careful observation to identify and frequently occurs in private settings.

Financial Exploitation

Financial exploitation is the unauthorized or inappropriate use of an elderly person's financial assets. Such mistreatment can take various forms, including theft of funds, forging signatures, tampering with bank accounts, or pressuring the elderly individual to alter a will or relinquish property. Caregivers, relatives, or even opportunistic fraudsters often target senior citizens who may struggle to manage their financial affairs due to mental decline or lack of financial support. Seniors who rely on others for care are particularly susceptible to financial exploitation. Frequently, the wrongdoer capitalizes on the senior's trust or their unawareness of financial matters. This form of exploitation might encompass charging excessive fees for services, exerting pressure on the elderly to surrender assets, or outright theft from savings, pension plans, or retirement accounts. The ramifications of financial abuse can be drastic and extensive, frequently leaving

senior victims in dire financial circumstances. They might forfeit the economic stability they spent years cultivating, which can thrust them into poverty or reliance on social services. Additionally, the psychological effects of financial exploitation can evoke feelings of betrayal, humiliation, and anxiety. Financial abuse further complicates an older adult's ability to uphold their independence, particularly if they lose access to essential resources needed for daily living.

Neglectful Mistreatment

Neglect is defined as the inability of caregivers or family members to meet the basic needs of a senior individual, which encompasses physical, emotional, and medical care. Neglect is evident when caregivers fail to provide the necessary essentials, such as suitable food, shelter, medical attention, and hygiene. It can also refer to the lack of ensuring social interaction, resulting in the elderly person feeling isolated and unsupported.

Neglect can be found in both facility-based and home environments. In care homes, for example, neglect may present as insufficient staff, lack of oversight, or not addressing medical emergencies. In a home environment, neglect can occur when adult children or other family members are unable to provide adequate care due to neglect, overwhelming responsibilities, or financial constraints.

The repercussions of neglect on senior individuals can be catastrophic, resulting in malnutrition, unaddressed medical issues, persistent pain, and deterioration in life quality. Extended neglect can lead to physical limitations, exacerbation of chronic illnesses, and even death. Beyond the physical damage, neglect tends to generate emotional and psychological challenges for elderly individuals, instilling feelings of abandonment and diminished self-esteem. Seniors experiencing neglect may suffer from depression and social isolation, making them more vulnerable to various types of abuse.

Reasons For Not Reporting Abuse of Domestic Violence

Despite the presence of laws and assistance frameworks, numerous instances of domestic violence targeting older individuals in India remain unreported. A range of social, psychological, cultural, and institutional elements leads to this lack of reporting.

1. Fear of Backlash and Dependency

A significant number of senior citizens find themselves reliant, both financially and physically, on the very family members who mistreat them. They worry that if they report the abuse, it could result in neglect, escalation of violence, or relocation to a senior care facility.

2. Societal Shame and Family Reputation

In Indian culture, the family unit holds immense significance. Elderly individuals frequently refrain from revealing family disputes to safeguard the family's honour. This societal expectation discourages them from seeking outside assistance.

3. Emotional Bonds and Shame

Older adults might still feel strong emotional connections to their aggressors, particularly if those individuals are their offspring or close family members. Feelings of guilt, affection, or denial often hinder them from recognizing the abuse or pursuing legal remedies.

4. Unfamiliarity with Legal Rights

Many senior citizens lack knowledge about legislation such as the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007¹⁴³, or how to engage with the justice system. This lack of legal awareness maintains their silence.

5. Limited Physical or Mental Capacity

Elderly individuals facing physical impairments or cognitive decline (e.g., dementia, Alzheimer's disease) may find it difficult to report abuse or even to recognize that it is occurring.

6. Absence of Accessible Assistance Services

In numerous regions of India, especially in rural locales, there is a lack of nearby legal aid sites, shelters, or counselling options for senior victims. This unavailability fosters feelings of powerlessness.

Impact of Family Structure on Elder Mistreatment

Being part of either an extended (joint) family or a compact (nuclear) family can impact how vulnerable an elder is to mistreatment. This vulnerability is determined by family dynamics, cultural attitudes, financial dependencies, and personal relationships, rather than merely the family structure.

1. Extended (Joint) Families: Crowded but Not Always be Safer

Traditionally, joint families are seen as protective spaces that provide companionship and care. Nonetheless, evolving values, urban pressures, and economic challenges can heighten the likelihood of elder abuse within these homes.

- Having multiple generations under one roof can create role conflicts, particularly when resources are scarce or expectations remain unfulfilled.
- Aging individuals may be viewed as economic or physical liabilities, particularly if they have ceased earning income.
- Disagreements surrounding inheritance and property control can result in emotional, financial, or physical mistreatment.
- "In urban joint families, elders often experience silent neglect or face coercion to relinquish property, especially in contexts affected by economic stress."

2. Small (Nuclear) Families: Isolation and Dependence

In nuclear families, older adults frequently depend on one or two caregivers, typically their adult children or in-laws. This situation raises the risk of neglect or emotional

¹⁴³ "MAINTENANCE AND WELFARE OF PARENTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS- CITIZENS ACT, 2007."

mistreatment, especially when caregivers feel overwhelmed or ill-equipped. Should the elder reside alone (due to children relocating or being widowed), social isolation emerges as a significant risk factor. A lack of shared caregiving responsibilities can amplify caregiver stress, inadvertently resulting in neglect or feelings of resentment.

Legal Frameworks:

With the introduction of legal and judicial systems, the Indian government has significantly advanced in recent years in safeguarding the well-being of elderly citizens. Notably, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill has emerged as a crucial tool in addressing the mistreatment and neglect of older individuals. This legislation aims to provide support and protection to seniors against any form of abuse or neglect.

This revised law enforces stringent consequences on those found guilty of mistreating or harming senior citizens. The repercussions can involve imprisonment ranging from three to six months, fines reaching up to Rs 10,000, or both. The initial Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007 set a maximum maintenance fee of Rs 10,000, this new legislation removes that limitation, marking a significant alteration¹⁴⁴. To alleviate disparities in status, opportunities, and resources, Article 38(1) mandates that the State ensure social, economic, and political equity across all areas of national life¹⁴⁵. Article 39(e) emphasizes the importance of safeguarding workers' health and well-being, preventing exploitation due to financial hardship, and ensuring stable employment. Additionally, Article 41 commits the State to provide work, education, and public aid, such as pensions, to help address issues like unemployment, aging, illness, and disabilities. These constitutional provisions underscore the state's responsibility

to foster social welfare, protect individual rights, and reduce socioeconomic inequalities¹⁴⁶.

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act grants older members of the Hindu community the legal right to receive maintenance from their children. This underscores the duty of children to support their aging parents when they are incapable of doing so independently. It is important to note that this law is applicable only to Hindus, whereas similar provisions exist in Muslim, Christian, and Parsi legal frameworks.

The Code of Criminal Procedure, enacted in 1973, is a secular law applicable to all Indian citizens. Section 125 of this code addresses maintenance for parents and spouses, indirectly encompassing interim maintenance for elderly parents, thereby ensuring their financial security¹⁴⁷. To invoke this section, an individual must demonstrate that their parents are being mistreated and lack sufficient means for their own support.

A void in legal protections has been addressed by the comprehensive measures established through the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents Act of 2007. This legislation encourages state authorities to establish senior care facilities in every district and mandates that children and heirs ensure their elderly relatives receive adequate support. The National Policy for Older Persons, introduced in 1999¹⁴⁸, aims to enhance the living standards of senior citizens in alignment with Article 41 of the Constitution. Beyond striving for their financial security, healthcare, living conditions, welfare, and protection from mistreatment, it emphasizes that the concerns of older individuals are a matter of national importance.

Analysis of the cases

1. S. Sethurathinam v. Barbara¹⁴⁹

This case revolves around a sequence of criminal appeals originating from maintenance issues under Sections

¹⁴⁴ "MAINTENANCE AND WELFARE OF PARENTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS- CITIZENS ACT, 2007,."

¹⁴⁵ "Constitution_of_india."

¹⁴⁶ {Citation}

¹⁴⁷ "National Policy for Older Persons Year 1999."

¹⁴⁸ {Citation}

¹⁴⁹ "Sunny Paul & Anr. vs State Nct Of Delhi & Ors. on 15 March, 2017."

488 and 489(2) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which were complicated by concurrent civil legal actions. The respondent, asserting her position as the legitimate spouse of the petitioner, submitted a request under Section 488 CrPC for support for herself and her child. Initially, the Additional First-Class Magistrate denied the request, determining that the marital relationship had not been established and that the daughter did not qualify as a 'child' per the section's definitions.

Upon review, the High Court overturned this ruling, concluding that the respondent was confirmed as the petitioner's wife and was entitled to receive Rs. 200 monthly for maintenance. The claim regarding the daughter was dismissed. Following this, the petitioner sought a review from the Supreme Court, which turned down the appeal, noting that the criminal court's determination would depend on the resolution of an ongoing civil case.

In response, the petitioner initiated a civil lawsuit requesting a declaration to confirm that the respondent was not his spouse and that he was not the father of the daughter. The civil court ruled in his favour on December 22, 1970. The respondent contested this ruling, and that appeal remains unresolved.

Based on the civil court's ruling, the petitioner filed petition under Section 489(2) CrPC aimed at the annulment of the maintenance order¹⁵⁰. The Magistrate rejected this petition, reasoning that the civil court's decision was not definitive due to the pending appeal. Meanwhile, the respondent filed a request to implement the maintenance order and reclaim

overdue payments. The petitioner contested both rulings through criminal appeal petitions.

Issues:

Whether the maintenance order could be annulled under Section 489(2) CrPC, referencing the civil court's ruling while an appeal on that decision remained active.

Whether the respondent could pursue the enforcement of the maintenance order even after the civil court decided that she was not the petitioner's spouse

The High Court dismissed the appeal, clarifying that the civil court's judgment was not conclusive due to the existing appeal. It reiterated that a ruling is deemed final only after all appeals have been resolved.

In the Court granted the petition, indicating that a woman is eligible to seek maintenance under Section 488 CrPC only as long as she is recognized as a wife. Following the civil court's determination that she was not a wife, even with an appeal in progress, her entitlement to request maintenance was effectively paused until a different ruling arose from the appeal.

In the Court allowed for the collection of maintenance arrears up to the date of the civil court's ruling, recognizing that those amounts were legitimately owed at that moment.

Conclusion:

This case exemplifies the overlap of civil and criminal jurisdictions regarding maintenance issues and highlights the idea that civil court determinations, particularly those relating to marital status, significantly impact maintenance rights as determined by criminal law. No civil court's ruling can govern criminal maintenance orders until such

¹⁵⁰ "THE CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE, 1973."

decisions are finalized through the appellate process.

2. Sunny Paul & Anr. v. State of NCT of Delhi & Anr¹⁵¹.

Issue

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 ("Act, 2007") raises the question of whether it solely addresses maintenance or if it also grants Maintenance Tribunals the authority to issue eviction orders in scenarios involving mistreatment, abuse, and harassment of seniors by their offspring or relatives.

Facts

Mr. Sunny Paul and Mr. Victor Dass initiated a writ petition contesting an eviction directive given by the Maintenance Tribunal in line with the Act, 2007.

The disputed property was owned by the Baptist Church Trust Association (BCTA), which permitted the parents of the petitioners (Respondents 2 & 3) to live there.

Due to ongoing instances of abuse and harassment directed at the elderly parents, who were already facing serious health challenges, the Tribunal mandated that the petitioners (sons of the respondents) along with their families vacate the premises.

The senior citizens had previously disowned the petitioners and issued public notices in newspapers to clarify their stance.

There was an attempt at reconciliation where the petitioners consented to relocate to a different property belonging to their parents, but this agreement was later annulled.

Arguments

The petitioners argued that the Act, 2007 does not grant the Tribunal the authority to issue eviction orders and that the petition should not be considered due to the absence of property ownership rights.

The respondents (the elderly parents) asserted their entitlement to a peaceful living environment and protection from harassment as stipulated in the Act.

Legal Provisions Discussed

Section 4: Outlines the maintenance provisions for parents and senior citizens.

Section 23: States that certain transfers are considered void if executed with the expectation of care that is subsequently not provided.

Section 2(f): Offers an expansive definition of "property" inclusive of leasing and licensing arrangements.

Section 6: Clarifies the Act's precedence over existing laws.

Section 22: Mandates the government to ensure the safeguarding of life and property for senior citizens.

Section 27: Prohibits civil courts from exercising jurisdiction in these matters.

Held

The Act is not restricted to financial support; it encompasses the safeguarding of the life and property of senior citizens.

The Tribunal can issue eviction orders even when the senior citizen does not possess legal ownership of the property but has legitimate possession rights (e.g., as a tenant or licensee).

The remedies for maintenance under Section 4 and eviction under Section 23 are distinctly different.

A request for eviction does not necessitate that the child or relative is next in line to inherit the property.

The Tribunal possesses the authority to issue eviction orders to uphold the senior citizen's right to live without disturbance. High Courts, per Article 226, have the power to enforce these provisions where sufficient administrative measures are lacking.

Conclusion

¹⁵¹ Agrawal, "Danamma vs Amar Singh."

The Delhi High Court validated the Tribunal's eviction order against the petitioners. It confirmed that under the Act, 2007, the Maintenance Tribunal holds the jurisdiction to issue eviction orders aimed at protecting senior citizens from maltreatment and ensuring their right to peaceful residence, even in instances where they do not own the property.

3. Danamma v. Amar Singh¹⁵²

Facts of the Danamma, an aging mother, experienced both financial and emotional exploitation at the hands of her children. She sought legal protections and the removal of her children from her estate under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007 (MWPSA Act)¹⁵³. The mother claimed her children had exerted pressure on her for property and were subjecting her to emotional manipulation.

Judgment of The Karnataka High Court favoured the elderly mother, providing her with relief under the MWPSA Act. The court recognized that property-related coercion, even without physical pressure, is a type of elder abuse. The court reiterated that financial exploitation and emotional harm perpetrated by children are unacceptable, and the well-being of older individuals must always take precedence. Additionally, the court mandated the eviction of the children from the property and established legal measures to protect the elderly from such exploitation.

Legal Implication Reinforced the viewpoint that elder abuse encompasses both economic coercion and emotional exploitation. Validated that older individuals are worthy of protection against financial mistreatment, and that disputes

regarding property can warrant legal action under the MWPSA Act. Affirmed the critical significance of the welfare and independence of older individuals in judicial contexts.

4. Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India¹⁵⁴

Facts of This case represented a pivotal constitutional event focused on the right to privacy as stated in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, highlighting the validity of Aadhaar. The ruling also had significant consequences for the rights of the elderly, as it reinforced the inherent dignity owed to every individual, including senior citizens. The matter highlighted the constitutional safeguards surrounding dignity, which is crucial in situations of elder mistreatment.

Judgment of The Supreme Court ruled that dignity constitutes a fundamental element of the right to life as outlined in Article 21, affirming that such a right belongs to everyone, particularly older individuals. The court asserted that any violation of a person's dignity, which also encompasses elder abuse, represents a breach of constitutional rights. This decision established a framework for safeguarding the dignity of senior citizens in legal matters, particularly concerning elder mistreatment.

Legal Implication:

Confirmed the constitutional right to dignity, applying it to older citizens who experience mistreatment. Established that elder mistreatment infringes upon both human rights and constitutional entitlements. Created a legal foundation for integrating protections against elder abuse within constitutional assurances, guaranteeing the dignity of seniors is upheld in both personal and public contexts.

Awareness and Education Regarding Domestic abused

Domestic violence is targeting senior citizens frequently remains in shadows because of

¹⁵² "PDF,"

¹⁵³ "MAINTENANCE AND WELFARE OF PARENTS AND SENIOR CITIZENS- CITIZENS ACT, 2007,"

¹⁵⁴ {Citation}

societal taboos, the normalization of mistreatment towards the elderly within households, and the hesitance of victims to come forward about their experiences. Thus, raising awareness and educating the public are vital in preventing and tackling domestic violence that older family members may endure.

1. Initiatives for Public Awareness

Awareness campaigns at a national and local scale are fundamental in informing the public about the various types of elder abuse, including physical, emotional, financial abuse, and neglect. The legal protections available for older individuals, as outlined in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007. The support systems in place, such as helplines, legal assistance, and police support.

For instance:

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment collaborates with NGOs to host events like Elder Abuse Awareness Week¹⁵⁵.

The helpline “Elder Line – 14567” is actively promoted as a resource for counselling and intervention.

2. Education at Community and Family Levels Awareness efforts should reach families and caregivers to develop empathy, respect, and understanding across generations. Educational resources might involve Pamphlets and posters in various local languages. Workshops hosted at a community centres, educational institutions, and places of worship. Programs aimed at educating family caregivers about the psychological and physical needs of elderly individuals.

For example: The Senior Citizens Cell of Delhi Police hosts safety audits and workshops within Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)¹⁵⁶.

3. Professional Development Programs

It is crucial to train law enforcement, healthcare workers, legal aid providers, and social workers to recognize and effectively respond to elder abuse.

Initiatives:

The National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) offers training modules specifically designed for frontline workers¹⁵⁷.

The Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPOP) supports these educational initiatives¹⁵⁸.

Source: NISD & IPOP Guidelines, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

4. Incorporation of Educational Content

Incorporating topics related to elder abuse in school and college programs promotes early awareness and challenges age-related prejudices. Relevant subjects may include:

- Rights of seniors. Responsible caregiving practices. Legal responsibilities children have toward their aging parents.

5. Leveraging Media and Digital Platforms

Public service announcements (PSAs), documentaries, and short films can portray elder abuse in a more relatable manner and reduce the stigma surrounding reporting it¹⁵⁹. Social media initiatives using hashtags such as Respect Elders and Say No to Elder Abuse can resonate with younger audiences.

6. Contributions of NGOs and Civil Society

Organizations like HelpAge India, Age well Foundation, and Dignity Foundation work diligently to raise awareness, conduct studies, and provide counselling services¹⁶⁰.

For example: HelpAge India's report titled old age Abuse in India (2022) increased public awareness by sharing real stories of old age person and statistical data.

¹⁵⁵ “Schemes | Department of Social Justice and Empowerment - Government of India.”

¹⁵⁶ “RWA’s.”

¹⁵⁷ {Citation}

¹⁵⁸ “Integrated Programme for Older People(IPOP) - BYJU’S.”

¹⁵⁹ “Letter Template for Public Service Announcement - Free Samples in PDF | Letter in.”

¹⁶⁰ “Blog | HelpAge India.”

Conclusion

Domestic violence targeting senior citizens, especially within familial settings, remains a deeply rooted and significantly underreported problem in India. Although legislative changes and initiatives like Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007 have established crucial legal frameworks, laws alone cannot eradicate abuse. What is essential is a societal shift fueled by education and awareness that can be illuminate the issue, empower older individuals, and transform family dynamics.

Old age abuse frequently stays obscured due to emotional reliance, insufficient or financial independence, societal stigma, and accepted neglect. There are Numerous victims fail to identify the mistreatment they endure—whether verbal degradation, enforced isolation, or financial exploitation—as instances of domestic violence. In this context, awareness becomes fundamental. It shatters the silence and gives both victims and by standers the courage to report and intervene.

The government of India has undertaken various initiatives to raise awareness, including the creation of the National Helpline for Senior Citizens (Elder Line - 14567)¹⁶¹. This helpline offers information, urgent support, and psychosocial assistance to elderly individuals encountering abuse or neglect. Reports from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment indicate that over 500,000 calls have been received since its launch, with a considerable portion related to in-home mistreatment.

Furthermore, HelpAge India's Annual Elder Abuse in India Report (2022) disclosed that 71% of elder respondents had faced some form of mistreatment, predominantly from family members. The report underscored a low level of awareness regarding legal rights and support

services, particularly among women and individuals in rural areas¹⁶².

An essential player within this framework is the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), which conducts training and educational initiatives under the Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPOP)¹⁶³. These educational offerings are aimed at equipping law enforcement, medical staff, and social workers with skills to effectively recognize and address elder abuse. Nonetheless, there remains a pressing need to enhance and standardize these training modules throughout various states and regions.

Awareness initiatives must also focus on caregivers and families. Elder abuse frequently arises from caregiver stress, a lack of understanding regarding elder rights, and financial strain. Accordingly, community-centred education initiatives—such as those carried out by Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)¹⁶⁴, NGOs, and local councils—should prioritize respectful caregiving, stress management techniques, and the legal repercussions of abuse. A noteworthy model to replicate is the Senior Citizens Security Scheme implemented by the Delhi Police, in which officers maintain regular communication with registered senior citizens and inform families about security measures and legal responsibilities¹⁶⁵.

Initiatives for education and outreach should also start early, especially among young people. Integrating intergenerational respect and elder care values into school and college curricula can nurture empathy and mitigate age-related biases. States like Kerala have launched programs involving students in volunteer work focused on elder care and awareness as part of initiatives supported by UNFPA.

¹⁶² "Blog | HelpAge India."

¹⁶³ "Integrated Programme for Older People(IPOP) - BYJU'S."

¹⁶⁴ "RWA's."

¹⁶⁵ "Delhi Police | Senior Citizen Services."

¹⁶¹ "Elder Line-National Helpline For Senior Citizen."

In less developed and rural regions, both digital and grassroots media can serve a crucial function. Programs on community radio, local language brochures, and campaigns using mobile vans can effectively communicate with older adults who may have limited literacy or technological capabilities. Social media initiatives like Respect Elders or End Elder Abuse have sparked a public dialogue about the dignity of elderly individuals.

Nevertheless, the policy framework needs to clearly emphasize awareness as a key aspect of elder justice. While the National Policy for Senior Citizens, 2011, is ambitious, it falls short in operational focus on education and outreach efforts¹⁶⁶. The proposed updates to the MWPC Act in 2023 suggest the establishment of Welfare Officers and a system for Caregiver Registration, which should include compulsory duties for awareness initiatives and sensitivity training.

In addition, non-profit organizations like Dignity Foundation, Agewell Foundation, and Night angle Medical Trust have led efforts in raising awareness through helplines, legal support, and training for caregivers. These groups often serve as the initial contact point for elderly persons who are reluctant to reach out to law enforcement or the judiciary.¹⁶⁷ Their involvement in providing door-to-door education, distributing materials on elder abuse, and forming support networks for survivors is vital¹⁶⁸.

Under the aegis of 'Digital India' programme launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Ministry has approved a Scheme for "**Skill Development in ESDM for Digital India**" on 09.12.2014 to cover all the States/UTs of the country in order to facilitate creation of an eco-system for development of ESDM sector in the entire country for facilitating skill development for 3,28,000 persons in ESDM sector at an outlay of Rs. 411 crores (approx.).

This is in continuation of the above mentioned 'Scheme for Financial Assistance to select States/UTs for Skill Development in Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector' approved earlier which is being implemented in 8 states¹⁶⁹

To sum up, awareness and education are essential components of legal intervention they are vital for preventing old age abuse. To empower senior citizen, encourage positively, family dynamics, promote community vigilance, and improve institutional reactions. They dismantle the patterns of silence, fear, shame, and reliance that conceal elder abuse behind the closed doors.

¹⁶⁶ "National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011."

¹⁶⁷ "Agewellfoundation.org."

¹⁶⁸ "Dignity Foundation."

¹⁶⁹ "Dignity Foundation."