



การกระทำความรุนแรงต่อผู้สูงอายุ: การทบทวนเชิงสาขาวิชาการเกี่ยวกับรูปแบบปัจจัยเสี่ยง และกลยุทธ์ในการป้องกัน

Elderly Abuse: An Interdisciplinary Review of Forms, Risk Factors, and Prevention Strategies

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วิทยาลัยการเมืองและการปกครอง มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏสวนสุนันทา

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการทบทวนวรรณกรรมเกี่ยวกับการกระทำความรุนแรงต่อผู้สูงอายุในมุมมองของสาขาวิชาการและทฤษฎีด้านอาชญาวิทยา ซึ่งถือว่าเป็นประเด็นปัญหาที่สำคัญแต่ไม่ได้รับการดำเนินการอย่างจริงจัง โดยในบทความนี้เป็นการทบทวนรูปแบบของการกระทำความรุนแรงต่อผู้สูงอายุโดยเน้นไปที่ความรุนแรงทางด้านร่างกาย ด้านจิตใจ ด้านการเงิน และการถูกทอดทิ้ง ตลอดจนมีการอธิบายปัจจัยเสี่ยงที่เอื้อต่อการกระทำความรุนแรงดังกล่าวข้างต้น ทั้งในระดับบุคคล ระดับความสัมพันธ์ และระดับสังคม นอกจากนี้ ยังกล่าวถึงผลกระทบของการกระทำความรุนแรงต่อผู้สูงอายุได้แก่ ผลกระทบทางด้านร่างกาย ด้านจิตใจ และด้านสังคม บทความนี้ได้นำเสนอกลยุทธ์การป้องกันรวมถึงความคิดริเริ่มด้านการศึกษา กลไกการสนับสนุนทางสังคม และข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายในการแก้ไขปัญหาดังกล่าว ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น บทความนี้ยังเน้นย้ำถึงความจำเป็นเร่งด่วนในการศึกษาวิจัย การตระหนักรู้และกลยุทธ์การแทรกแซงเพื่อจัดการกับการกระทำความรุนแรงต่อผู้สูงอายุ ซึ่งจะมีส่วนช่วยให้ผู้สูงอายุมีความปลอดภัยและความเป็นอยู่ที่ดีขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: การกระทำความรุนแรงต่อสูงอายุ, ประชากรผู้สูงอายุ, การกระทำความรุนแรงทางด้านร่างกาย, การกระทำความรุนแรงทางด้านจิตใจ

Abstract

This article is a literature review on elder abuse from an interdisciplinary perspective and criminological theory. It is considered an essential issue that has not been adequately addressed. The article reviews various forms of violence against the elderly, focusing on



physical abuse, psychological abuse, financial abuse, and neglect. It also explains various risk factors that contribute to such violent acts, at individual levels, relational levels, and societal levels. Furthermore, it discusses the consequences of violence against the elderly, including physical, psychological, and social impacts. The article presents various prevention strategies and initiatives in education, social support mechanisms, and policy recommendations to address the mentioned problems. Additionally, the article emphasizes the urgent need for research, awareness, and intervention strategies to address elder abuse, ultimately aiming to enhance the safety and well-being of the elderly.

Keywords: Elder Abuse, Elderly Population, Physical Abuse, Psychological Abuse

Introduction

Elder abuse, an often unseen and underreported phenomenon, is a significant global concern with serious social, economic, health, and human rights implications (WHO, 2020). It's a problem that pervades all societal sectors and cultural boundaries, often occurring within the most trusted relationships, including family members, friends, and caregivers. Despite its widespread prevalence, it remains one of the least investigated types of violence in national surveys, and few countries have established effective national programs to tackle it (Dong, 2017). The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as 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" (WHO, 2020). The abuse can manifest in various forms, such as physical, psychological, sexual, financial exploitation, and neglect. Each form, equally severe and harmful, has unique characteristics, but they often overlap in many instances, leading to exacerbated detrimental outcomes for the victims (Yon et al., 2017).

With the rapid demographic transition toward an aging global population, the magnitude of elder abuse is expected to escalate. The United Nations (2017) projects that by 2050, one in six people worldwide will be over age 60, up from one in nine in 2017. This demographic shift accentuates the pressing need to address elder abuse to ensure the well-being of an increasingly aging population. However, despite the urgency and its profound implications, elder abuse remains an under-researched, under-detected, and poorly understood topic. The clandestine nature of the abuse, the victim's reluctance to report, the lack of standardized reporting and research methodologies, and societal



ignorance and denial contribute to this knowledge gap (Storey, 2020). As a result, effective prevention and intervention strategies are scarce, further perpetuating the cycle of abuse (Pillemer et al., 2016).

This paper embarks on an interdisciplinary journey to elucidate the complexities of elder abuse. It presents a comprehensive examination of the issue, addressing each form of abuse in detail to outline the diverse ways the elderly population might be subjected to harm. The multifaceted risk factors that make older adults more susceptible to abuse, including individual health conditions, relational dynamics, and societal constraints, will be explored (Johannesen & LoGiudice, 2013). Moreover, the paper will delve into the detrimental impacts of elder abuse. Elder abuse not only inflicts immediate physical harm but also has long-lasting psychological and social repercussions, including but not limited to depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and social isolation (Dong, 2015). The systemic review of these impacts aims to underscore the severity of the issue and justify the need for effective intervention. Lastly, the paper will present an array of prevention strategies, borrowing knowledge from fields like social work, psychology, gerontology, and law. It will examine the potential of educational initiatives, social support systems, policy changes, and legal measures to curb elder abuse (Sirey et al., 2015). The role of various stakeholders, including family members, caregivers, health professionals, policymakers, and the community at large, will be recognized in these preventative strategies.

The primary aim of this extensive examination is to enhance our knowledge of elder abuse in various regions of the world and among different ethnic groups. This review highlights the need for targeted interventions and emphasizes the critical need for more research, policy formulation, and education within communities. The intent is that this investigation into elder abuse will add to the wider conversation about the safety and welfare of older adults, fostering a society in which the elderly can age with honor, esteem, and without the threat of mistreatment.

Is the Elderly Associated with Crime?

Elderly abuse has been a topic of significant concern and research in the last decade. The association between elderly abuse and crime is evident, with several theories shedding light on its occurrence, and empirical research providing insights into the extent and nature of the issue. Elder abuse takes multiple forms, ranging from neglect to financial



exploitation, physical harm, emotional abuse, and even sexual abuse. The World Health Organization highlighted that about 1 in 6 individuals aged 60 years and older experienced some form of abuse in community settings during the past year (WHO, 2020). Such statistics underscore the pressing nature of this issue, and that several of these instances equate to criminal offenses.

A number of theories have been proposed to understand the root causes behind such abuses. For instance, the Caregiver Stress Theory posits that caregivers, burdened by the demands of their role, might resort to abusive behavior out of frustration (Burnes et al., 2017). However, this theory has been challenged, as many caregivers manage stress without resorting to abuse. The Social Learning Theory offers a perspective that individuals might replicate abusive behaviors they witnessed or experienced earlier in their lives (Kong & Moorman, 2015). This implies a cyclical nature of abuse passed on through generations. The Exchange Theory suggests a darker societal undertone where elderly individuals if perceived as non-contributors to the household or society, might face abuse. Such perceptions devalue the existence of the elderly, making them vulnerable targets (Yon et al., 2019). From a broader vantage, the Societal/Structural Theory comments on societal norms and values that might devalue or disregard the elderly, thereby contributing indirectly to their abuse (Mysyuk, Westendorp & Lindenberg, 2016). Routine Activity Theory, established by Cohen and Felson (1979), and Labeling Theory, proposed by Becker (1963), offer distinct yet complementary frameworks for understanding elder abuse. Routine Activity Theory, which posits that crime occurs when there is a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of a capable guardian, highlights the vulnerability of the elderly due to factors like frailty, cognitive impairment, and social isolation, and points to the absence of effective guardianship as a key risk factor. Conversely, Labeling Theory focuses on the societal construction of deviance, suggesting that elder abuse is influenced by how society labels and reacts to certain behaviors, thereby shaping the treatment and perception of both victims and perpetrators of elder abuse. Integrating these theories provides a more holistic understanding of elder abuse, recognizing the importance of environmental factors and societal attitudes in its occurrence and persistence. Victimization theory, when applied to elder abuse, offers a nuanced understanding of why certain older adults are more susceptible to abuse, emphasizing the interplay between victim vulnerability and perpetrator behavior. This theory posits that characteristics such as



physical frailty, cognitive impairment, dependence on caregivers, social isolation, and past abuse experiences heighten the risk for elders, making them more attractive targets for abuse. It also highlights the complex dynamics often present in elder abuse cases, where perpetrators are frequently known and trusted individuals like family members or caregivers, complicating detection and reporting due to emotional ties, fear of retribution, or concern for the abuser's welfare (Jackson & Hafemeister, 2011).

Empirical research has shed light on alarming trends. Studies indicate a significant underreporting of elderly abuse, implying that actual instances might be far higher than documented (Acierno et al., 2016). Another disturbing finding is the association of certain risk factors like dementia, which increases the likelihood of abuse (Dong & Simon, 2014). Furthermore, the repercussions of such abuse are severe. Lachs and Pillemer (2015) illustrated that abused elderly individuals faced a higher risk of mortality. The financial aspect is equally concerning. A rise in sophisticated scams targeting the elderly has been documented, highlighting the vulnerability of this demographic to financial exploitation (Peterson et al., 2019).

Given the above, there's a pressing need for community-based interventions, policy changes, and an amplification of awareness to counter this grave issue. Researchers like Pillemer et al. (2021) have emphasized the potential efficacy of these measures, urging swift action. In conclusion, the association of elderly abuse with crime is undeniable. With a confluence of theories explaining its occurrence and a plethora of empirical findings highlighting its prevalence, the importance of understanding and countering elderly abuse has never been more paramount.

Prevalence of Elderly Abuse

Elder abuse, a distressing violation of human rights, has been an alarming global issue with the challenging task of determining its true prevalence due to numerous complexities (Dong, 2015). There is an array of factors that contribute to these complexities such as the varying definitions of elder abuse, different methodological approaches, a widespread reluctance among victims to report their abuse, and significant cultural variations in recognizing and addressing the issue (Yon et al., 2017; Acierno et al., 2010). Despite these intricacies, existing studies provide a general picture of the scope and seriousness of elder abuse.



In a comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Yon et al. (2017), the estimated overall prevalence rate of elder abuse in the past year among community-dwelling older adults was found to be approximately 15.7%. This alarming figure suggests that about one in six elderly individuals might be victims of some form of abuse, underlining the severity of the issue. However, these rates can significantly vary when considering the specific type of abuse. The study found that the prevalence of financial abuse was 6.8%, psychological abuse was 11.6%, and physical abuse was 2.6%, with neglect reported as the least common form of abuse, presenting a prevalence rate of 0.9% (Yon et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, these figures might be a severe underestimate, considering the hidden nature of elder abuse and the lack of reporting by victims. A U.S. survey from the National Council on Aging (NCOA, 2020) found that only one in 24 cases of elder abuse is reported to authorities, demonstrating a significant disparity between the occurrence and the reporting of elder abuse. The reasons for this lack of reporting are multifaceted and can include fear of retaliation, feelings of shame, concerns about potential institutionalization, or a lack of understanding that what they are experiencing constitutes abuse (Acierno et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the prevalence of elder abuse varies significantly across different cultural and societal contexts. Dong and Simon (2013) discussed that specific forms of abuse might be more prevalent in particular cultural settings due to societal norms, traditional beliefs about aging, and the perceived role of the elderly in society. The recognition and interpretation of what behaviors are considered abusive also vary across cultures, which subsequently affects the reported prevalence rates.

Global demographic trends further exacerbate the issue. The United Nations (2017) predicts that the number of people aged 60 years and older will more than double from 2015 levels, reaching nearly 2.1 billion by 2050. This demographic transition, coupled with an increase in elder abuse prevalence rates, could lead to an exponential rise in elder abuse cases unless effective measures to prevent and address this issue are promptly implemented.

Despite these complexities, the findings from Pillemeyer, Burnes, Riffin, and Lachs (2016) support the view that elder abuse, especially when it is chronic or involves more than one type of abuse, can lead to severe physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences. Additionally, elder abuse, particularly financial abuse, can significantly



impact the economic resources of an elderly person, thereby affecting their quality of life (Acierno et al., 2010).

In summary, even though obtaining an accurate measurement of the true prevalence of elder abuse is a daunting task due to various complexities, the available evidence paints a distressing picture of the magnitude of the problem. These findings underscore the urgent need for more systematic, reliable, and culturally sensitive research approaches to grasp the real scale of the issue, inform policy and intervention strategies, and fuel public awareness campaigns.

Forms of Elderly Abuse

Elder abuse presents a multi-faceted challenge given its diverse forms and the potential complexity of abusive relationships. The World Health Organization (2020) classifies elder abuse into five main categories: physical, psychological, or emotional, sexual, financial, and neglect. Each of these forms carries significant, often devastating consequences for older adults.

1) Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is defined as any act of violence causing injury or physical discomfort, often leaving visible markers, such as cuts, bruises, and burns, making it easier to identify compared to other forms of abuse (Fang et al., 2018). Sharma (2022) characterizes physical abuse as varying from mild forms such as slapping to more extreme cases involving beatings and restraints. This abuse, often perpetrated against the elderly by caregivers or others, can encompass not just direct violence like punching, kicking, and burning, but also includes acts like improper medication practices, food deprivation, or subjecting the elderly to harsh weather, whether intentionally or by neglect. Correspondingly, A study in Thailand by Traijutakarn (2021) revealed that 2.3% of a sampled group suffered from physical violence, mainly through punching, beating, shoving, and accidental involvement in family disputes, with the offenders frequently exhibiting symptoms of drunkenness and high levels of aggression. According to a study by Dong, Simon, and Evans (2012), physical abuse often leads to negative health outcomes such as chronic pain, sleep disturbances, and overall deterioration of health. The same study also found a significant association between physical abuse and a higher risk of mortality among elderly individuals.



2) Psychological or Emotional Abuse: Psychological or emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal, intended to inflict emotional pain or distress. It includes actions like humiliation, intimidation, and habitual blaming (Fang et al., 2018). Sharma (2022) notes that emotional and psychological abuse of the elderly can involve treating them like children and subjecting them to demeaning behavior. In a Thai study by Traijutakarn (2021), it was discovered that the majority of the elderly, amounting to 9.8%, experienced the most significant levels of emotional and psychological violence. This included being subjected to threats, verbal insults, harsh and vulgar language, disrespect, or derogatory and demeaning speech. The primary perpetrators of this abuse were found to be family members such as children and spouses, as well as relatives and neighbors. Sirey et al. (2015) highlighted the negative impacts of emotional abuse, linking it to depression, anxiety, and lower levels of self-efficacy among older adults. The covert nature of psychological abuse often makes it difficult to detect and address, leading to its high prevalence and underreporting rates (Dong, 2015).

3) Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse refers to forced or unwanted sexual interaction of any kind. While it is the least reported form of elder abuse, largely due to feelings of shame or fear (Dong, 2015), its impact on victims is substantial. According to Sharma (2022), sexual abuse encompasses a range of behaviors, including making inappropriate sexual remarks, unwarranted touching, photographing the individual in sexually explicit positions, exposure to pornography, compelling sexual interaction with another person, or any form of undesired sexual behavior. This category of abuse also extends to acts such as rape, forced sodomy, or mandatory nudity. A study by Burgess et al. (2014) found that elderly victims of sexual abuse often exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and severe anxiety, significantly impacting their psychological well-being.

4) Financial Abuse: Financial abuse or financial exploitation involves the illegal or unauthorized use of an older person's funds or assets (Fang et al., 2018). Sharma (2022) explains financial exploitation as involving a variety of deceitful actions like fraud, obtaining money under pretenses, forgery, forced property transfers, misusing funds, and denying older individuals access to their assets. This also covers improper use of legal guardianship, powers of attorney, or conservatorships. Complementing this, A study in Thailand by Traijutakarn (2021) found that 2.3% of the elderly faced financial abuse. This often included being deceived out of money, such as seniors giving their ATM cards to family members or



acquaintances to withdraw their pension, but not receiving the full amount or any money at all. Additionally, issues with inheritance disputes within families were noted, with the main perpetrators of this financial violence being family members, including children, spouses, sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law. This form of abuse not only causes significant economic loss but also affects the victims' mental health, contributing to feelings of insecurity and distress (Acierno et al., 2010). A study by Lichtenberg, Stickney, and Paulson (2013) further suggested that victims of financial abuse exhibited higher levels of depression and lower perceived self-efficacy.

5) Neglect: Neglect is a form of abuse that involves the refusal or failure to fulfill a caregiving obligation. This might involve physical neglect (failure to attend to personal hygiene, health, or safety needs), emotional neglect (failure to provide social companionship), or financial neglect (failure to meet the financial obligations owed to the elder person) (Fang et al., 2018). Sharma (2022) indicates that neglect is the most prevalent form of elder maltreatment, which can be either intentional or unintentional. Intentional neglect involves a caregiver deliberately failing to fulfill their responsibilities towards the elderly, while unintentional neglect can happen when caregivers are overwhelmed or distracted by other stressors. Signs of neglect include dehydration, malnutrition, bedsores, untreated physical conditions, unsanitary living environments, poor personal hygiene, inappropriate clothing for the weather, unsafe living conditions like lack of heat or running water, and even abandonment. In a related finding, Traijutakarn's (2021) study in Thailand showed that 2.9% of the elderly experienced neglect, primarily characterized by being left alone without adequate care and attention. The main perpetrators of this neglect were often children, grandchildren, and spouses. As per the research by Mouton et al. (2016), neglect was associated with adverse health outcomes, including malnutrition, severe dehydration, and increased susceptibility to illnesses.

Taken together, these different forms of elder abuse can occur separately or concurrently, significantly deteriorating the victims' physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. As a society, there is a dire need for effective strategies to detect and prevent these various forms of elder abuse and to support those affected.



Risk Factors of Elderly Abuse

Elder abuse is a serious issue that can have multiple risk factors, affecting both the elderly person and the abuser. It is influenced by three critical factors: personal, environmental, and societal.

1) Personal Factors: Personal factors encompass the individual characteristics of the elderly, such as health status, cognitive abilities, and financial dependency. Studies indicate that in Turkey, India, Iran, Nepal, Thailand, and South Korea, poor health, including physical frailty and mental health issues, significantly increases the risk of elder abuse, with emotional abuse in Turkey being closely linked to poor health, particularly in women (Daşbaş & Işıkhan, 2018; Seth et al., 2018; Mohseni et al., 2019; Timalsina, 2021; Jeon & Kong, 2022). Cognitive impairments, such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease, heighten the risk for various forms of abuse due to impaired judgment and communication, compounded by caregiving stress when support and training are lacking (Cooper et al., 2008; Dong, 2015; Acierno et al., 2010). This situation was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, as observed in China, with lower income, older age, and lower cognitive ability being significant risk factors (Du & Chen, 2021). Additionally, financial dependence emerges as a critical factor, with studies from Turkey, India, Iran, and Lagos State showing that economic stress and financial instability increase the prevalence of elder abuse, underscoring the need for strategies that address financial empowerment and support for the elderly (Daşbaş & Işıkhan, 2018; Seth et al., 2018; Mohseni et al., 2019; Onigbogi et al., 2018).

2) Environmental Factors: Environmental factors significantly influence the prevalence and severity of elder abuse, encompassing both the physical living conditions and the social support networks of the elderly. Poor or inadequate living conditions, such as overcrowded or unsafe environments, have been linked to increased risks of elder abuse (Yon et al., 2017). Furthermore, the strength and nature of an elder's social support network are crucial; social isolation heightens the risk of abuse, as isolated individuals lack protective oversight and intervention (Burnes et al., 2015). The broader community and neighborhood environment also play a vital role, with communities characterized by limited resources, high crime rates, or poor social cohesion experiencing higher instances of elder abuse (Dong & Chen, 2020). Additionally, access to community services and resources, including healthcare and social services, is essential in mitigating the risk of neglect and abuse; lack



of such access can leave elderly individuals more vulnerable (Schofield et al., 2016). Collectively, these environmental factors highlight the need for comprehensive strategies that address living conditions, strengthen social support networks, enhance community resources, and ensure accessibility to essential services for the elderly (Acierno et al., 2017).

3) Societal Factors: Societal factors, encompassing broader cultural and societal attitudes, play a significant role in the context of elder abuse. Ageism, a prevalent societal issue, contributes to the mistreatment of older adults by fostering negative stereotypes and devaluing their contributions, making them more susceptible to abuse and neglect (Chang & Levy, 2021). Public awareness about elder abuse is another crucial factor; societies with low awareness and inadequate educational efforts on elder abuse tend to have higher rates of abuse due to underreporting and lack of intervention (Roberto, 2016). Moreover, societal norms and family dynamics, such as expectations of filial piety or the taboo of discussing family matters publicly, can also influence the incidence and reporting of elder abuse (Yan & Fang, 2017). Additionally, legal frameworks and policies that inadequately protect the rights and well-being of the elderly or lack enforcement contribute to the persistence of elder abuse (Jackson & Hafemeister, 2021). Thus, societal attitudes, awareness levels, cultural norms, and legal structures collectively impact the prevalence and handling of elder abuse, highlighting the need for comprehensive societal change and stronger protective measures for the elderly.

Impacts of Elderly Abuse

The repercussions of elder abuse are widespread, causing harm on individual and societal levels, and are characterized by their physical, psychological, social, and economic dimensions.

1) Physical impacts: The immediate physical impacts of elder abuse may include visible injuries such as bruises, fractures, and head traumas (Dong, Simon, & Evans, 2012). Further, victims of elder abuse often suffer from long-term physical health issues. For instance, a study by Lachs et al. (1998) found that older adults who experienced abuse, even moderate abuse, had significantly higher morbidity rates. This is often attributed to chronic pain, disability, increased risk of hospitalization, accelerated functional decline, and overall deteriorated health. Dong, Simon, and Evans' (2012) study reported a strong association between elder abuse and increased risk of mortality.



2) Psychological impacts: The psychological repercussions of elder abuse can be profound and long-lasting. Common psychological outcomes include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), lowered self-esteem, and feelings of shame (Sirey et al., 2015). Dong and Simon (2013) identified a strong correlation between elder abuse and suicidal ideation, suggesting that elder abuse could be a significant risk factor for suicide in older adults.

3) Social impacts: Elder abuse can lead to increased social isolation as victims may withdraw from social interactions due to feelings of embarrassment, fear, or trauma, which can, in turn, exacerbate mental health issues (National Center on Elder Abuse, 2020). In a survey by Amstadter et al. (2011), elderly victims of abuse reported reduced social networks and lower levels of social support, further reinforcing the cycle of abuse and isolation.

4) Economic impacts: Financial exploitation can significantly reduce an older person's resources, impacting their ability to meet basic needs and potentially increasing their reliance on public assistance (Acierno et al., 2010). Lichtenberg, Stickney, and Paulson (2013) found that victims of elder financial abuse were more likely to report economic insecurity. Additionally, these individuals might struggle to escape the abusive situation due to a lack of financial resources.

5) Societal impacts: On a broader scale, elder abuse can strain health and social services due to increased demand, contributing to the overall societal cost (Dong, 2015). Furthermore, the occurrence of elder abuse within communities can undermine social trust and cohesion, indirectly affecting the overall well-being of the community (Baker, 2017).

Overall, the impacts of elder abuse highlight the urgent need for effective prevention, detection, and intervention strategies. Recognizing the multifaceted consequences of elder abuse is a crucial step toward creating a society in which all individuals are respected and safe as they age.

Prevention Strategies

Elder abuse is a pressing societal issue that demands a multi-pronged, strategic approach for prevention, comprising educational initiatives, effective legislation, comprehensive support services, and ongoing research.

1) Education and awareness: Enhanced education and public awareness are critical in preventing elder abuse. This includes programs to educate the public about the



reality of elder abuse, its indicators, and the appropriate avenues for reporting suspected abuse (National Council on Aging, 2021). Furthermore, professional training programs for healthcare workers, social service providers, and law enforcement personnel can heighten the detection rates and improve the response to elder abuse. A study by Burnett et al. (2014) found that professional training could significantly increase the identification and reporting of suspected abuse cases among healthcare providers.

2) Legislation and policies: Enacting and enforcing legislation that safeguards the rights of older adults is essential. These legal frameworks should be broad enough to address all types of elder abuse and stringent enough to dissuade potential abusers (Roberto, 2016). In a review of elder abuse laws, Johannesen and LoGiudice (2013) found that countries with comprehensive elder abuse laws had lower reported instances of abuse. Furthermore, policies should address underlying social and economic issues that increase the risk of elder abuse, such as social isolation and poverty.

3) Support services: Support services can empower older adults, reduce their vulnerability to abuse, and provide necessary aid to victims. These services can range from home care, financial management assistance, and counseling services, to accessible healthcare (Pillemer et al., 2016). Community-based programs that promote mental health, social engagement, and self-efficacy have been shown to decrease the incidence of elder abuse (Dong & Simon, 2014).

4) Research: Sustained research efforts are required to continually refine our understanding of elder abuse and its prevention. Further exploration of risk factors, effects, and the efficacy of prevention strategies is needed. Dong (2015) emphasized the need for research to be culturally sensitive, given the variations in elder abuse across different cultures.

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA) in the USA and Hourglass in the UK are prominent examples of programs dedicated to the education and prevention of elder abuse. NCEA (2023) provides educational resources and training for healthcare workers, social service providers, and law enforcement personnel, and conducts public awareness campaigns to educate about the signs of elder abuse and reporting methods. It also supports research and collaborates with various organizations to inform policies and enhance prevention strategies (NCEA, 2023). Similarly, Hourglass (formerly Action on Elder Abuse) in the UK offers a confidential helpline for elder abuse advice and support (Hourglass, 2021), runs awareness campaigns, and provides specialized training for



professionals to better detect and address elder abuse. The organization is also involved in advocacy and policy work to protect older people and contributes to research on elder abuse. Both NCEA and Hourglass demonstrate a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to tackling elder abuse, emphasizing the importance of education, awareness, and collaborative efforts in both the USA and the UK.

In conclusion, a collective, concerted effort from all sectors of society is necessary to effectively prevent elder abuse. Such an approach will ensure older adults can enjoy their golden years with dignity and security, free from the fear of exploitation and harm. The summary of findings is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of findings

	Issue	Findings
1	Prevalence of elderly abuse	Depending on each societal context
2	Forms of elderly abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical 2. Psychological 3. Emotional 4. Sexual 5. Financial 6. Neglect
3	Risk factors of elderly abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual factors 2. Environmental factors 3. Societal factors
4	Impacts of elderly abuse	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical impacts 2. Psychological impacts 3. Social impacts 4. Economic impacts 5. Societal impacts
5	Prevention strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education and awareness 2. Legislation and policies 3. Support services 4. Research



Discussion

The comprehensive review of violence against the elderly has provided valuable insights into the prevalence, forms, impacts, and prevention strategies of elder abuse. This discussion section further explores key points and implications arising from the review, highlighting the significance of addressing elder abuse as a pressing societal issue.

One crucial aspect to consider is the underreporting and hidden nature of elder abuse. Many cases go unreported due to factors such as fear, shame, dependency, and lack of awareness among both victims and bystanders (Dong, 2015). Research suggests that only a fraction of elder abuse cases are reported, leading to a significant underestimation of the true prevalence of the problem (Acierno et al., 2010). It is essential to create a safe and supportive environment that encourages reporting and provides accessible channels for victims to seek help. This can be achieved through community awareness campaigns, training programs, and collaborations between healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and social service organizations (Pillemer et al., 2016).

Moreover, the discussion emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches in addressing elder abuse. Healthcare providers, social workers, law enforcement officers, policymakers, and community members must work together to detect, intervene, and prevent elder abuse effectively. Collaboration between these stakeholders can enhance the identification and reporting of abuse cases, improve victim support services, and facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators (Roberto, 2016).

The review also highlights the complex interplay of risk factors contributing to elder abuse. Socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and financial dependence, have been identified as significant risk factors (Johannesen & LoGiudice, 2013). Older adults who are socially isolated or dependent on caregivers are also at increased risk of abuse (Dong, 2015). Additionally, caregiver stress and burnout have been associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in abusive behaviors (Burnett et al., 2014). To effectively prevent elder abuse, interventions should address these underlying factors. Social support programs, caregiver training, and policies that alleviate financial strain can reduce the risk of abuse and promote the well-being of older adults (Pillemer et al., 2016).

Prevention strategies discussed in the review, such as education and awareness campaigns, legislation and policies, support services, and research, require ongoing evaluation and adaptation. Regular assessment of the effectiveness of prevention efforts is



necessary to identify gaps and improve intervention strategies (Dong, 2015). For example, training programs for healthcare providers have shown promising results in increasing the detection and reporting of elder abuse cases (Burnett et al., 2014). Additionally, the use of technology in prevention and detection should be explored further, considering the growing digital landscape and the potential risks and opportunities it presents in the context of elder abuse (Acierno et al., 2010).

Cultural considerations emerge as a crucial aspect in addressing elder abuse. Different cultural beliefs, norms, and attitudes towards aging and caregiving may influence the perception and response to elder abuse. Cultural factors can impact help-seeking behaviors, willingness to report abuse, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Future research should examine cultural variations in the prevalence, reporting, and intervention approaches to develop culturally sensitive prevention strategies that respect the diversity of older adults (Dong, 2015).

It is important to acknowledge that addressing elder abuse is not solely the responsibility of one entity or sector but requires collective action. Governments, organizations, communities, and individuals must all play a role in creating a society that values and protects its older population. By working together, we can promote awareness, improve support services, strengthen legislation, and foster a culture of respect for the rights and dignity of older adults (Roberto, 2016).

In conclusion, the comprehensive review of violence against the elderly underscores the urgent need for effective prevention, detection, and intervention strategies to address elder abuse. By raising awareness, implementing evidence-based policies, providing support services, conducting further research, and fostering collaborative efforts, society can work towards creating a safe and inclusive environment for older adults, free from the scourge of elder abuse. The collective efforts of healthcare providers, caregivers, policy-makers, researchers, and the community at large are essential to protect the well-being and dignity of older adults and ensure they can age with safety and respect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1) Conclusion: The comprehensive review of violence against the elderly highlights the significant challenges posed by elder abuse and the urgent need for prevention, detection, and intervention strategies. The prevalence and detrimental impacts



of elder abuse underscore the importance of collaborative efforts from healthcare providers, caregivers, policymakers, researchers, and the community at large. The review has shed light on the prevalence of elder abuse, emphasizing the need for accurate and consistent reporting to understand the full extent of the problem. It has also explored the various forms of elder abuse, including physical, psychological, financial, and neglect, each with its unique dynamics and consequences. This comprehensive review determined that the factors leading to elder abuse encompass individual, environmental, and societal factors. Furthermore, The impacts of elder abuse on the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of older adults are far-reaching, necessitating comprehensive support services and interventions. The implications derived from the review call for action from different stakeholders. Healthcare providers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to elder abuse, while caregivers require support and resources to ensure quality care and prevent burnout. Policymakers play a vital role in enacting and enforcing legislation that protects the rights of older adults, while researchers are called upon to conduct further studies to advance our understanding of risk factors, interventions, and the effectiveness of prevention strategies. Lastly, the community at large should foster a culture that values and respects older adults, promoting awareness, and creating a supportive environment that discourages elder abuse. Looking ahead, future research should focus on longitudinal studies, examining risk and protective factors, cultural considerations, technology's role in elder abuse, evaluating interventions, and exploring intersectionality. By addressing these research gaps, society can better understand and combat elder abuse, leading to improved prevention strategies, early detection, and effective interventions. Ultimately, by working together, we can create a society that values and protects its elderly population, ensuring their safety, dignity, and well-being. Through education, awareness, supportive policies, and continued research, we can make significant strides in preventing and addressing elder abuse, making a positive difference in the lives of older adults, and fostering a society that respects and values people of all ages.

2) Recommendations: Based on the comprehensive review of violence against the elderly, several key recommendations can be made to address and prevent elder abuse effectively. These recommendations encompass various levels, including healthcare practice, policy-making, community engagement, and research.



Enhance healthcare provider education: Healthcare professionals should receive comprehensive education and training on recognizing and responding to elder abuse. This includes understanding the signs and symptoms of abuse, conducting appropriate assessments, and knowing the necessary steps for intervention and reporting. Continuous education programs and professional development opportunities should be offered to ensure healthcare providers remain up-to-date with best practices in elder abuse detection and management.

Strengthen legislation and policies: Policy-makers should prioritize the development and implementation of robust elder protection laws and policies. These should encompass all forms of abuse and provide clear guidelines for reporting, investigation, and prosecution of perpetrators. Adequate resources and funding should be allocated to support social services, helplines, and intervention programs for elder abuse victims. Additionally, policies should address the social determinants of elder abuse, such as poverty and social isolation, by implementing programs that address these underlying factors.

Promote community awareness and engagement: Community-wide initiatives are crucial in preventing elder abuse. Public awareness campaigns should be developed to educate community members about the signs, consequences, and prevention strategies related to elder abuse. Collaborations between community organizations, religious institutions, and volunteer networks can help provide support, social engagement, and outreach services to older adults. Encouraging community members to report suspected cases of abuse and providing safe reporting mechanisms can empower individuals to take action against elder abuse.

Support caregivers: Caregivers play a vital role in the well-being of older adults, and supporting them is crucial for preventing abuse. Caregivers should have access to resources, training, and support services that equip them with the necessary skills to provide quality care without resorting to abusive behaviors. Respite care programs should be available to alleviate caregiver stress and prevent burnout. Additionally, providing financial assistance and social support to caregivers can help reduce the risk of abuse.

Conduct further research: Ongoing research is necessary to continually enhance our understanding of elder abuse. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term consequences of abuse on older adults' physical and



psychological well-being. Investigation into the risk and protective factors associated with elder abuse can help identify high-risk populations and inform targeted prevention efforts. Additionally, research should explore innovative approaches, such as the use of technology, to prevent and detect elder abuse.

Improve collaboration and information sharing: Collaboration between healthcare providers, social service organizations, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders is essential. Establishing networks and platforms for information sharing, case consultations, and coordinated responses can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and support services. Interdisciplinary training programs and conferences that bring together professionals from various fields can facilitate collaboration and knowledge exchange.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can work towards the prevention and reduction of elder abuse. The concerted efforts of healthcare providers, policy-makers, community members, and researchers are essential in creating a society that values and protects its elderly population.

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