

# A Study on Domestic Violence and Abuse against Elderly People

Titi Mukherjee

Bethune College. E-mail: [titimukherjee251992@gmail.com](mailto:titimukherjee251992@gmail.com)

---

## To Cite this Article

Titi Mukherjee (2024). A Study on Domestic Violence and Abuse against Elderly People. *SAARC Journal of Social Science*, 2: 1, pp. 103-119.

---

**Abstract:** *Background:* The aging population is increasing worldwide, but the abuse of the elderly often unrecognized and hidden, a form of domestic violence, has also been growing, with significant public health and societal implications. The empirical literature is scant on the extent and impact of violence on their lives. Studies have shown that abuse against older adults is highly underestimated. *Objective:* To identify the most prevalent forms of abuse of the older adults, the abusers as well as to examine the social context in which abuse occurs with the help of theoretical approaches. *Methodology:* Through the quantitative and qualitative techniques, descriptive and explanatory research, a cross-sectional survey of 100 elderly people residing in the city of Calcutta is undertaken to analyze the problem where gender, age and living arrangement is looked upon as the major risk factors. *Results:* The findings revealed that a major section of the elderly have suffered some form of abuse, these being especially of the emotional kind, that of neglect, disrespect, verbal abuse, violation of rights followed by loss of dignity, choice and feelings of insecurity. The most common perpetrators of abuse are found to be the primary caregivers, the immediate family members. The determinants of abuse were the marital status, living arrangements economic condition, educational level, relationship with the family, increased dependency and social isolation. *Conclusion:* Most of the cases being underreported, it was found that identifying abuse in the case of elderly people is challenging. The evidence therefore invites to reflect on the development of intervention strategies in order to identify and combat the problem of abuse and assist the policy planners to help this particular segment of people to lead a life with dignity.

**Keywords:** Aging, Abuse, Elderly, Risk, Violence

## I. Introduction

Over the past few decades India's demographic landscape has witnessed several unprecedented changes. As the world is undergoing several demographic upheavals with the retrogression of social values, the situation of the elderly is becoming crucial worldwide and particularly in our country. Of late, elder abuse has become one of the most significant and emerging problems which is affecting a considerable section of the

elderly population in India. Elder abuse can occur in different forms such as physical, psychological, emotional and financial abuse. Sometimes the abuse occurs when the elderly people are deliberately neglected by their family and caregivers whereas in other cases elder abuse can be the result of unintentional neglect.

Recent research has shown that the cases of elder abuse have rapidly increased in our country (Govil and Gupta, 2016). Today, the elderly are becoming the victims of heinous crimes, grievous hurt, murder and also they are often abused and isolated by their caregivers, who are their family and neighbours which certainly affects the wellbeing of the elderly people. Thus with the rising incidences of elder abuse, there is a growing fear of abuse amongst the elderly.

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the different forms of abuse against the elderly?
2. What are the major causes of abuse against the elderly?

### **Rationale of the Study**

According to Population Census, our country is home to more than hundred million elderly people today and their numbers are projected to triple in the next three decades. Thus, with the steady and sustained growth of the elderly population ageing has become a new challenge with accompanying problems equally new and numerous. Hence, considering the challenges confronted by the elderly in the changing socio-cultural context, abuse against elderly becomes a crucial subject of interest and focus for researchers, social workers and policy makers.

The reasons for conducting the research are as follows: - Firstly, it is important to understand that why the elderly people cannot be considered a single homogenous group. Secondly, it is important to know that what makes the elderly people highly vulnerable to abuse and who are their abusers. Thirdly, it is necessary to investigate how the violence in families and relationships impacts on the physical and mental wellbeing of the elderly people. Fourthly, it has also been found that elderly women are much more subjected to violence due to their age and allied physical, social and economic issues. Usually the acts of violence and abuse against the elderly women remain a taboo and hence most of the times the cases of abuse are under-reported mostly out of shame and denial, fear of vengeance or because of the fact that generally the elderly women are ignorant of her human rights and the existing laws and regulations. Hence, it is essential to examine the gendered issues while considering the abuse and crimes against elderly. Finally, this study offers a small initiative for creating awareness amongst the families and community members to reduce the extent of such problems.

## II. Review of Earlier Literature

In our country we have a very little information on elder abuse be it in the form of empirical evidence or statistical data. However reviewing the existing studies the researcher tried to identify the following themes pertaining to abuse against elderly. Extensive persual of the literature helped the researcher to select two relevant themes.

The themes are as follows:

1. Abuse of Elderly in Indian context.
2. Women and Ageing

Following are the detailed analysis of the themes :

**1. Abuse of elderly in Indian context:** Recent studies have explored that there has been a steady rise in the older persons of our country along with the advancement in the medical field, public health care services and technological development. With this advancement in all spheres of life, globally life expectancy has increased from 40 years in 1951 to 64 years and this has resulted in more people living to old age. (The Economic Times,2019). Further, in the process of urbanization, industrialization, modernization and globalization, the traditional religions and belief systems have been utterly transmogrified such as the traditional joint family system is declining with the tendency to form nuclear unit. Similarly, change is taking place not only in the kinship ties but between the relationship between parents and children. Under these circumstances, all aspects of care for the older persons- be it financial, health and shelter is at stake. Hence, in the context of changing social values, the growing insecurity of the older persons is evident. Thus, the status of the elderly is deteriorating with the passing years and they are often subjected to abuse. A report published by Help Age India (2011) identified the nature and extent of elder abuse. Further, it also focused on the crimes against the elderly. The study exhibited that 48% of the respondents are physically abused while 60% of them reported that they are verbally abused, 37% of them are emotionally abused, 35% of them are economically abused and 20% of them reported that they feel neglected by their family as well as society. Furthermore, the study revealed that burglary, molestations are the major types of criminal acts faced by the elderly people. Similarly, a survey was conducted by the Group for Economic and Social Studies (2009) in four metropolitans of India and reported different types of crimes committed against the elderly people which includes crime against the body ie, murder, attempt to murder, hurt and kidnapping etc., crime against the property ie, dacoity, robbery, burglary, theft, and economic crime like cheating , criminal breach of trust etc. It was found that rich elderly are much more vulnerable to exploitation, pressure and physical threats for property and financial gain from their family members, relatives and antisocial elements (Mishra & Patel, 2013).Further, Yatish Kumar and Amita Bhargava (2014) in their study “Elder Abuse in Indian families: Problems and Preventive Actions” stated that most

of the elderly in our country are subjected to abuse due to loneliness, negligence, less importance and illness due to ageing and lack of treatment. The authors are of opinion that changing family structure and modernization could be responsible to put the elderly persons in such treacherous conditions. In fact, Punita Govil and Swati Gupta (2016) in their study, “Domestic Violence against Elderly People: A Case Study of India” reveals that emotional detachment from family and social relationships adds fuel to the fire.

**2. Women and Ageing:** Like most of the disciplines, gerontology has also failed to address the issues of elderly females as it has always explicitly or implicitly focussed on the issues of elderly males. Even the women’s movement which sought equal rights and opportunities for women, did not define ageing as a feminist issue. However, it is a fact that the patriarchal traditions which is usually followed by women throughout their lives, shape many of the problems faced by them in their old age. The feminist theories have analysed that the system of patriarchy subordinates women since by birth by controlling their labour, reproduction and sexuality through the systems of marriage, religion, market and state. Women face sexism throughout their lives. It is considered that a woman is always vulnerable and therefore she has to always depend on men: on the father in childhood, on the husband in adulthood and on the son in old age (Desai and Raju , 2000). Shikha Kumari, Alka Sharma and Tanuj Sing (2015) in their work, “Abuse, Violence and Crime against Elderly Women in Modern India” explored that more of the elderly women are abused because they are dependent on their son and daughter-in-law for finance and shelter after the death of their husbands. In some of the cases the authors found that they had some resources as in money or jewellery or land or ownership of house but everything was taken by their son and made them totally dependent. Dr. Komal Chandiramani (2017) in her work “Elder Abuse in India: Issues and Considerations” reported that a study of physical abuse was conducted in an urban setting of our country which revealed that mostly the victims were females in 88% of the documented cases while the abusers were found to be the male. Further, it has also been found out in different studies that other than older men, older women are considerably more in number, widowhood, providers of social and physical support to other relatives, poorest of the poor, ailing, are therefore vulnerable to abuse and institutionalisation (Desai and Raju , 2000).

### *Theoretical Understandings*

The research draws its idea primarily from the following theories:

#### *Situational Model Theory*

The Situational Model Theory of ageing focuses on the stress of the overburdened caregivers which often leads to abuse. According to this theory, when the caregivers are overloaded with responsibilities, they sometimes fail to cope with the demands of

caring and become abusive towards their vulnerable seniors and therefore creates an environment for abuse (Momtaz Abolfathi Yadollah, Hamid AizanTengku and Ibrahim Rahimah, 2013).

### ***Exchange Theory***

The Exchange Theory was proposed by James Dowd and it is actually derived from a larger theoretical base known as Social Exchange Theory. Exchange Theory helps us to understand the alliance between the care givers and the care recipients. According to this theory, elder abuse is the consequence of elderly's increasing dependence on the care giver and vice-versa. As we start ageing, we become vulnerable and powerless. We then often tend to depend on our caregivers/family members/relatives for assistance and submit our will to them, which may increase the risk of abuse. A caregiver may resent that the older person is completely dependent on the caregiver, the caregiver may experience anger that leads to abusive behaviour (Momtaz Abolfathi Yadollah, Hamid AizanTengku and Ibrahim Rahimah, 2013).

### **III. Objectives**

There are three objectives of this study.

1. To investigate the different types of abuse against the elderly.
2. To examine the reasons of increase in abuse against the senior citizens.
3. To propose recommendation to combat the problem.

### **IV. Methodology**

The present study is an explanatory and partly descriptive research. It attempts to find out the reasons behind the increasing abuse against the elderly. Besides, the objective of the study is to examine the different types of abuse committed against the elderly. Understanding the nature of abuse committed against the elderly is one aspect of abuse against elderly but what are the reasons for the increasing incidence of abuse against elderly is its explanatory aspect. The study included 100 respondents in total who were chosen purposively. Out of these 100 respondents 50 were males and 50 were females. All of them are aged 60 and above. The respondents were from different localities in South Dumdum Municipality and Baranagar Municipality of North 24 Parganas district. The study was conducted with the help of a structured interview schedule which had both close ended and a few open ended questions.

### **V. Findings and Discussion**

The findings and interpretation in this study has been divided into 5 parts. The first part consists of general information of the respondents. The second part and the third part

describe the economic status of the respondents and the living conditions of the elderly. The fourth part focuses on the elderly abuse. Finally, the fifth part of the study focuses on the respondent's awareness of the laws and programmes of elderly abuse.

## 1. General Information

**Table 1: General information of the respondents**

1.1	Age distribution of elderly according to sex			
	Age in years	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Young old (60-69)	22	23	45
	Middle old (70-79)	19	19	38
	Old old (80-89)	8	7	15
	Oldest old (>90)	1	1	02
Total	50	50	100	
1.2	Distribution of elderly according to marital status			
	Marital Status	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Married	34	08	42
	Unmarried	07	00	07
	Widow/Widower	07	41	48
	Separated	02	01	03
Total	50	50	100	
1.3	Educational status of the respondents			
	Education	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Illiterate	08	16	24
	Primary	06	07	13
	Secondary	08	15	23
	Higher secondary	06	07	13
	Graduate	20	04	24
Post graduate/Professional	02	01	03	
Total	50	50	100	
Structure of the family				
1.4	Family Type	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Nuclear	19	12	31
	Joint	14	13	27
	Others	17	25	42
Total	50	50	100	

Table 1 reveals the general information of the elderly including age, marital status, educational status, structure of the family according to their sex. The total number of respondents were 100 out of which 50 of them were male and rest of the 50 were female. Out of the 50 male respondents 22 of them belong to the age group of young old (60-69 years), 19 to the age group of middle old (70-79 years), 8 to the age group of old old (80-89 years) and 1 to the age group of oldest old (>90 years). Similarly, out of the 50 female respondents 23 of them belong to the age group of young old (60-69 years), 19 to the age group of middle old (70-79 years), 7 to the age group of old old (80-89 years) and 1 to the age group of oldest old (>90 years). The table shows that the maximum number of male and female respondents belong to the age group of young old (60-69 years) and minimum number of male and female respondents belong to the age group of oldest old (>90 years). Further, the table illustrates that 42% of the total respondents are married, 7% are unmarried, 48% are widow and 3% are separated. It is seen that maximum number of respondents who are married belong to male category. 34 out of the 50 male respondents are married. On the contrary, 41 out of the 50 female respondents are widow which represents a major loss for the older women as their status changes in our society not just due to ageing but when they loses their husband. Besides, happiness and unhappiness in old age depends to a great extent of having spouse. Hence, widowhood leads to social, emotional and financial insecurity and the widows become more vulnerable to abuse, crime and institutionalisation. On the basis of the educational status of the elderly, the table shows that 24% of the respondents are illiterate, 13% of the respondents received primary education, 23% of them received secondary education, 13% of them got higher secondary education, 24% of them are graduate and only 3% of them are post graduate/ professional. Another important observation is the incidence of illiteracy was found to be higher amongst elderly women than men. Considering the structure of the family, the table shows that 31% of the respondents reported that they are living with their spouses or parents. 27% of the respondents belong to joint family, where they are living with their family members. However, rest of the 42% respondents reported that they are living in old age homes, some of them are totally separated from their family and some others are living alone. In fact, it was found that the ratio of female respondents are higher in this category.

## ***2. Economic Profile***

Table 2 deals with the economic profile of the respondents according to their sex. It is seen that 22% of the respondents are currently employed and 78% of the respondents are unemployed. These 22% respondents who reported that they are still working, are associated with the unorganised sectors. It was found that they are still working in this age because of desperate poverty as they have to find a significant portion of income



**Table 2: Economic Profile of the Respondents**

Distribution of the elderly on the basis of current engagement in economic activity				
2.1	Current engagement in economic activity	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Employed	12	10	22
	Unemployed	38	40	78
	Total	50	50	100
Major sources of income of the elderly				
2.2	Major sources of income	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Pension	16	05	21
	Post office	00	00	00
	Mutual fund	01	00	01
	Government scheme	00	01	01
	Home rent	01	03	04
	Savings	10	01	11
	Remittance	09	31	40
	Working	13	09	22
	Total	50	50	100

for sheer survival of their household. Mostly the male respondents were found to be rickshaw pullers and women as domestic workers. Additionally, some of the female respondents reported that they entered the labour force as they were the only bread earners of their family after the death of their husbands, desertion, separation or male marginality due to alcoholism and so on. Hence, they not only accepted inferior dead-end jobs but also lowered the supply price of their labour in order to get an entry. But the intriguing fact is women's labour in production is not visible in the unorganised sector. Thus, in spite of women's contribution in all spheres of life our patriarchal society systematically exploits and trivializes what women can offer even in their old age. Besides, the respondents on being asked their source of income revealed that 21% of them are pension holders, there is no one in the second category that is post office, 1% of them have mutual fund, 1% of them depending on government schemes, 4% depend on house rent, 11% of them depend on their own savings, 40% of the respondents are entirely depending on their family and children and rest of the 22% of the respondents are still working. It was found that the dependency ratio is much higher amongst the female respondents having no source of income. Hence, they have to entirely depend on their children and family for their survival. In fact, the widows were found to be the worst sufferers amongst the respondents. Upon the death of their husbands, they receive pension at a much reduced rate and thus they become dependent on their family for not having adequate material power base .



### 3. Living Condition

3.1	Living arrangement of the respondents			
	Type of living arrangements	Category		Total(%)
		Male	Female	
	With family members	26	25	51
	Spouse	07	00	07
	Living alone	02	10	12
	Old age home	15	15	30
Total	50	50	100	
3.2	Type of relationship shared with family members			
	What kind of relationship do you share with your family ?	Category		Total(%)
		Male	Female	
	Cordial	26	20	46
	Non-cordial	23	27	50
	Disobedient	00	02	02
	Not mentioned	01	01	02
Total	50	50	100	
3.3	Participation of the respondents in different types of decision making			
	Types of decision making	Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
	Economic	01	00	01
	Non-economic	02	12	14
	Both	26	05	31
	None	21	33	54
Total	50	50	100	

The above table depicts the living condition of the respondents. Table 3. illustrates that 51% of the respondents live with their family members. Further, the data shows that 7% of them live with their spouses. It was found that only male respondents are living with their spouses but no woman was found to enjoy this privilege. This gender differential in the living arrangement of the elderly is primarily because of the higher incidence of widowhood among the female respondents than among the male respondents. Hence, they have no other option but to live with their off springs. Moreover, 12% of the respondents were reported to be living alone and the ratio is higher amongst the female respondents. It was found that some of the female respondents are separated, some of them are widow and some of them have only female children who are married .30% of the respondents are living in Old age homes. Out of these 30% respondents it was found that some of them are unmarried, some of them are widow/widowers, some of them do not have kids, some of them only have daughter/daughters who are now married and the respondents do not want to stay with them, some of the respondents kids are

now in foreign lands and they cannot adjust in their son/daughters country, some of them used to feel lonely at their place and some of them reported that they want to live a happy and independent life and that is the reason they are staying in old age home. It was also found that as far as the immobile elderly are considered, their family members have to spend a lot of time and money after their nursing and care. For some of them it is neither possible nor feasible. Hence, the old age homes are the only resort for these elderly. Further, the table reveals different type of relationship of the elderly with their family members. The table states that 46% of the respondents have cordial relation with their family members, 50% have non-cordial. The ones who stay in old age homes are found to have non-cordial relation with their family members. Basically, they are neglected by their family and it is one of the reasons of their pitiable situation at such an age. 2% of the respondents reported that their family members are disobedient to them and rest of the 2% did not mention anything about this. Again, it was found from the data that the ratio of female respondents are higher in case of having non cordial relation with their family. Often they were found to be isolated and neglected and consequently they suffer from depression and loneliness. Also the table illustrates the participation of the elderly in different types of decision making according to their sex. The table shows that 1% of the respondents only take economic decisions in the family, 14% of the respondents take non-economic decisions of the family and 31% of them take both economic and non-economic decisions in the family. Some of the male respondents reported that they are still the heads of the households and they are the decision makers regarding family affairs even after retirement. However, it was seen that no woman takes part in the economic decision of the family. But they mostly take part in the homely decisions like how to cook, what to eat etc. But rest of the 54% take none of the above. Some of them are not allowed to take decisions in their family, some of them had surrendered their property in favour of young members and thus lost their control and some of the other respondents reported that they prefer to remain on their own with their activities like worshipping gods, praying etc. and they don't like to get involved in the family affairs in this age.

## 4. Elderly Abuse

### *4.1. Distribution of Respondents by Kind of Abuse Faced According to Different Age Groups*

Table 4.1 illustrates that 9% of the respondents reported that they were physically abused. The ratio is higher among the young old age group. It is a typical form of elder abuse which was found to be a significant cause of injury and illness of the respondents. These respondents were found to be suffering from severe trauma and it seemed that it is

**Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Kind of Abused Faced According to Different Age Groups**

Forms of Abuse		Age Group (in years)				Total (%)
		60-69	70-79	80-89	>90	
Physical Abuse		7	1	1	0	9
Emotional Abuse	Neglect	30	19	12	1	62
	Disrespect	17	10	10	1	38
Financial Abuse		3	3	1	1	8
No Response		12	12	2	0	26

almost impossible for them to be able to recover from the trauma. In fact, the impact of trauma gets worsened as they are unable to tell others about the incidents for fear of the act being repeated more violently. Sometimes, the fear of being beaten cause as much harm to the respondents functioning as the actual act. Further, 62% of the respondents reported that they are being neglected by their family members. Again it is found that the ratio is much higher in the young old age group. Besides 38% of the respondents reported that their family do not respect them. Some of them are psychologically abused by their family members – in terms of verbal assaults, threats and fear of isolation. Neglect and disrespect are the common forms of abuse which is occurring in families at all economic levels and age groups and often leading the respondents to isolation and despair. 8% of the respondents reported that they were financially exploited by their family members, relatives and community members. Financial exploitation is indeed a criminal act which deprived the respondents of independent income and assets. 26% of the respondents did not properly respond, some of them were hesitant while answering this question and some of them did not answer because of shame and fear.

#### 4.2. Distribution of Respondents by Kind of Abuse Faced According to Sex

**Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Kind of Abused Faced According to Sex**

Forms of Abuse		Category		Total (%)
		Male	Female	
Physical Abuse		4	5	9
Emotional Abuse	Neglect	26	36	62
	Disrespect	14	24	38
Financial Abuse		3	5	8
No Response		16	10	26

Table 4.2 illustrates that more women than men complained of maltreatment in terms of physical, emotional and financial abuse. It was found that the ratio of dependency on the family and care givers is higher amongst the female respondents and their dependant position is a risk factor related to abuse by their care givers. *Similar*

observations were made in the study entitled “Abuse, Violence and Crime against Elderly Women in Modern India” which was conducted by Shikha Kumari , Alka Sharma and Tanuj Singh.

### 4.3. Distribution of Elderly Abuse by Perpetrators

**Table 4.3: Distribution of Elderly Abuse by Perpetrators**

Person who Abused	Category		Total (%)
	Male	Female	
Son	15	22	37
Daughter	3	5	8
Son-in-law	1	2	3
Daughter-in-law	1	14	15
Domestic Help	1	0	1
Others	11	7	18
No Response	26	19	45

Table 4.3 illustrates that 37% of the respondents reported that they were abused by their son who supposed to share the responsibility of the family along with the other family members. 8% of the respondents reported that they were abused by their daughters, 3% by son-in-laws 15% by their daughter-in-laws and 1% be domestic helpers. It was found that son and daughter-in-law together and daughter-in-law were mentioned by the respondents as the ones who were the hardest to get along with in the family. But it is a fact that women are one of the primary care givers in the family. Hence, much of the care giving to a dependent elder arises for women, whether or not they do paid work. At middle age , women may not only be experiencing their own age-related problem but their responsibilities may peak rather than diminish at this stage of life and thus causing considerable role overload and stress in their lives. The burden thus created for families may lead to abuse and neglect of the elderly. *The support for these findings can be derived from the situational model theory.* Additionally, some of the respondents belonging to the other category (18%) reported spouse abuse. Whether they are husbands or wives, because of their own advanced age, reduced energy and age related ailments, the spouses as care givers are likely to experience extreme stress. However, the study indicates that the female respondents suffered more serious abuse. But 45% of the respondents did not respond to the question because of shame and fear.

### 4.4. Elderly Perception for the Reasons of Abuse

Table 4.4 illustrates the elderly perception for the reasons of abuse for elderly abuse 62% of the respondents reported that the reason for being abused is their emotional dependency on their care givers. It was found that the abusers were mostly the offspring

**Table 4.4. Elderly Perception for the Reasons of Abuse**

Reasons	Category		Total (%)
	Male	Female	
Emotional Dependence of the Abused	26	36	62
Economic Dependence of the Abused	8	18	26
Financial Dependence of the Abuser on the Abused	14	5	19
Changing Ethos	13	14	27
Elderly in need of care	23	28	51

of the abused who shares the responsibility in their family. Emotional dependency was found to be a great risk factor for domestic violence of these elderly respondents. Further, the study indicates that the ratio of being emotionally abused is higher amongst the elderly women because they experience an increased risk of attachment due to the time they invested in their family and relationships. Often, the respondents mentioned that their son and daughter in laws and daughter-in-laws as the ones who are hardest to get along in the family. In most of the cases it was found that the mother-in-laws and the daughter-in-laws are the opponents. The rivalry between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, created by patriarchy, was found getting aggravated in the changing socio-cultural structure. The elderly cannot claim authority over their family and children or expect care in this scenario. The elderly women who generally do not have the ownership right to family housing and property, and ill, now tend to continue the household duties in order to prove useful to their family. In fact, most of the elderly respondents were found to experience neglect and indifference from their children. Besides, 26% of the respondents reported that they are abused because they are economically dependent on their family and relatives. This kind of dependency is again a risk factor related to abuse by the respondents care givers. Again the study shows that the ratio is higher amongst the women. On the contrary to this finding the study indicates that 19% of the respondents reported that their abusers are financially dependent on them. *This may seem contradictory but the support for this finding can be derived from the social exchange theory. According to this perspective, where the key concept is power, abusive acts seem to be acts carried out by abusers as a response to their perceived powerlessness. When the adult child or the relatives depend on the elderly, they feel powerless as his or hers dependency violates society's expectation. Therefore, the abuser maltreat the elderly, whom they are depending on, as a compensation for his or her lack of power.* This time the study indicates that the ratio is higher amongst men. On the other hand, 27% of the respondents reported that change in culture is the another reason for their abuse. Unlike the old traditional culture, the loss of the elderly people's status in the family, the breakdown of the joint family system, conflicts regarding family property and the

inter-generational changes were found to be the reason of the abuse. Many of these respondents are ageing in isolation rather than in the traditional environment of an extended family. Left alone, these people are often neglected and abandoned by their family. 51% of the respondents were mainly found to be neglected by their family and the ratio of female respondents were found to be higher in this case. *Thus the findings, in this case are similar to the study entitled “Domestic Violence against Elderly People: A Case Study of India” which was conducted by Punita Govil and Swati Gupta.*

## 5. Action Taken by the Respondents to Address Abuse

### 5.1. Approach Taken in Case of Abuse

**Table 5.1: Approach taken in Case of Abuse**

Person Approached	Category		Total (%)
	Male	Female	
Approached Social Workers	0	0	0
Approached Counsellor	0	0	0
Senior Citizen Association	0	0	0
Filed a complaint with Police	2	2	4
Legal Consultation with Lawyer	0	0	0
Didn't Do Anything	32	15	47
Not Mentioned	16	33	49
Total	50	50	100

Table 5.1 illustrates that only 4% of the respondents filed complaints in police station. Rest of the respondents either didn't do anything or they didn't mention anything about this matter. They didn't want to disclose their personal information due to shame and fear and that is why elder abuse is highly under reported in this locality. It seemed that the respondents in these locality only file complaints only in extreme situation when the situation goes out of control.

### 5.2. Awareness of Laws and Programmes against Elderly Abuse

**Table 5.2: Awareness of Laws and Programmes Against Elderly Abuse**

Awareness of Laws and Programmes Against Abuse	Category		Total (%)
	Male	Female	
Yes	19	11	30
No	31	39	70
Total	50	50	100

Table 5.2 illustrates that 30% of the respondents are aware of the policies, different schemes and laws provided by the government and the ratio is higher amongst men. But 70% are unaware of it. Some were also found saying that they know that there were some schemes and laws that could help the senior citizens for a better life but they couldn't name them. It is especially unaware amongst the women.

## VI. Conclusions and Suggestions

From the foregoing analysis and discussion, it is clear that ageing is a feminist issue. The problems of older women are not only the consequences of their ageing process but because of the fact that they are always kept subordinated in our society which is basically patriarchal in nature. In fact, elder women are the victim of triple jeopardy i.e. ageism, sexism and disempowerment. It is a fact that in our patriarchal society the human-social experiences such as marriage, child-birth, child-rearing, wage earning are different for men and women. The sexist ideology of patriarchy glorifies the idea of motherhood which has become the central theme in women's lives. Ideology of women as natural mothers in turn produces the domestic/ public spilt with the domestic as a natural place for love, affection, and care and nurturing and hence it is considered that women are better caregivers than their male counterparts. Thus the findings of the study revealed that most of the female respondents role in the family was restricted as "mothers" and "caregivers" even in their old age when children and the young family members would supposedly provide care. Additionally most of the female respondents were found to be less authoritative and reported that they don't take part in the decision of the family. On the contrary, most of the male respondents reported that they are the head of their family and they take part in both the economic and non-economic decisions of their family. As because, having access to decision -making power reflects a more prominent social position of a person , it was found that most of the female respondents are relegated to an inferior status which makes them susceptible to abuse in comparison with their male counterparts. However, the back-breaking, endless and repitative labour that women do all their life, is not considered work at all in a patriarchal society as it is seen as a set of tasks that are naturally performed by the women and they don't get paid for it. The present study shows that most of the female respondents are unpaid family workers while some of them are living on their husband's pension and some of them are working in the unorganised sectors because of desperate poverty. Only few of them were found to have their own pensions. In fact, many of the respondents reported that they do not possess adequate resources or nothing at all in order to live an independent life. Thus the dependency ratio was found to be higher amongst the female respondents and therefore they enjoy a very low status in the society which makes them vulnerable to abuse. On the contrary most of the male respondents reported that they have their own pensions and savings and even many of them own property. Hence



they don't have to depend on their family members which shows they comparatively enjoy a higher status in the society. Ownership and management of property and financial assets, in fact, is an important indicator of elderly status. Literacy also plays an important role here. In our patriarchal society mostly women are deprived of education as in many cases they are brought up to believe that they are better to serve as wives and mothers. Hence many of them give up on their education and get married very early. Besides some of them do not get the opportunity to educate themselves and therefore they are not even aware of their basic human rights and can never fight for them and for this reason they have to depend on others for the rest of their lives and are often subjected to abuse. The findings of the study are no different. Most of the female respondents were found to be illiterate and didn't receive adequate education to get a secured job and most of them do not have the security of maintenance and housing in this old age especially after the death of their husbands. Further, due to illiteracy they cannot fight for their basic human rights, neglect their health, suppress their need of autonomy and they are more likely to self-sabotage. In terms of health status it was also found that older women's typical "female" concerns are often underestimated and they are not even aware of the fact that they do have certain health needs based on their sex. Consequently, many of them suffer from menopause and they don't even consult with doctors. Besides, the study also reveals that the female respondents are more abused than their male counterparts as they are less empowered in all aspects. Thus in our patriarchal society women are systematically deprived of their basic rights which makes it hard for them to step out from the vicious circle of disempowerment.

The following remedial and corrective measures can be suggested to curb abuse against the elderly. It has been found that the elderly people often suffer from isolation as mostly they are neglected by their caregivers which often leads them to depression and loneliness. Hence, reducing isolation by socialising the elderly with the outside community programmes can be a strategy to put an end to elder abuse and neglect in society. Non-governmental organizations can play an important role in these cases. They can help screening programmes in communities to identify the senior citizens who are vulnerable to abuse and they can educate the victims by providing information about their rights and steps they can take to reduce the risk of being abused. Besides, the elderly people should always be motivated to stay active. Being physically active in old age can extend the life span of the elderly and reduces the possibility of being vulnerable to elder abuse. Further, the elderly people must be aware of their financial resources. Sometimes they might require a helping hand to manage their money but ultimately they should be the soul one to handle their financial resources. Last but not the least, developing public awareness campaigns is necessary to promote a better understanding of elder abuse and to plan and work on awareness-raising activities.

### *Acknowledgement*

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my esteemed M.phil supervisor, Dr. Mallarika Sarkar Das, Head, Department of Sociology, University of Calcutta, for her precious guidance, intellectual stimulation, continuing and sustained encouragement, untiring help and her unflinching interest with great love and affection throughout the present study.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the old age homes – Shantineer and Anandaniketan for their assistance. The cooperation of the respondents is also worth mentioning which helped me to complete the study.

### *References*

- Abolfathi Momtaz Y., Hamid T. A. & Ibrahim R. 2013. Theories and measures of elder abuse. *Psychogeriatrics*,13,pp.182-188. Available from :<https://doi.org/10.1111/psyg.12009> [25 January 2024]
- Ahuja, Ram. 2014. *Social Problems in India*. Jaipur : Rawat Publication
- Chandiramani,K.2017. Elder Abuse in India: Issues and Considerations. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*,4, doi:10.25215/0404.147
- Desai Murli. & Raju Siva. 2000. *Gerontological Social Work in India: Some Issues and Perspectives*. Delhi : B.R. Publishing Corporation
- Govil P. & Gupta S. 2016. Domestic Violence against Elderly People: A Case Study of India. *Advances in Aging Research*, 5, pp.110-121. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/aar.2016.55011> [25 January 2024]
- Kumari S., Sharma A. & Singh T. 2015. Abuse, violence and crime against elderly women in modern India. *Review of research*, 5(2), pp. 1-7, Available from: <http://oldror.lbp.world/UploadedData/1967.pdf> [25 January 2024]
- Kumar Y. & Bhargava A. 2014. Elder Abuse in Indian families: Problems and Preventive Actions. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication*, 4(10), pp.1-8.Available from: <https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-1014/ijsrp-p3498.pdf> [25 January 2024]
- Mishra A.J. & Patel A.B. 2013. Crimes against the Elderly in India: A Content Analysis on Factors causing Fear of Crime. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 8(1), pp. 13-23. Available from: <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1862583> [25 January 2024]
- The Economic Times.2019. *Share of population over age of 60 in India projected ti increase to 20% in 2050:UN*.Available from: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/share-of-population-over-age-of-60-in-india-projected-to-increase-to-20-in-2050-un/articleshow/68919318.cms?from=mdr> [25 January 2024]
- World Health Organization.2022. *Abuse of Older People- World Health Organization (WHO)*. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people> [25 January 2024]