

# Abuse and Neglect of Elderly in Families

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Data were gathered from a quota sample of 140 elderly subjected to abuse and/or neglect by their family members. The respondents included both men and women living in Visakhapatnam city. The patterns of abuse of the elderly were measured using a modified form of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). The results indicate that the most likely victims of elder abuse are widowed women, elderly with poor economic background, and dependent. As regards the forms of abuse, verbal abuse of the elderly was reported more frequently followed by material abuse and neglect. A sizeable portion of the respondents have reported physical abuse. It was also found that abuse has negative implications—social, psychological and behavioural for the elderly. Further, the data indicated that the son, the daughter-in-law and the spouse in that order are the frequently reported abusers. It is recommended that programmes should be designed to provide adequate opportunities for participation of the elderly, to reduce social isolation and to provide support services to families caring for the elderly to help reduce stress of the caregivers.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the increase in longevity of human life, people are living into advanced old age. This has created a burden on the families as middle aged children are now expected to take care of the old people for longer periods. The resultant burden causes stress leading, in most cases, to abuse of the elderly. The consequences of elder abuse could be serious and diverse. According to Star (1987), besides physical injuries, elder abuse may result in psychological problems for the elderly such as depression, fear, helplessness, low self-esteem and problems relating to eating and sleeping.

In the Indian society the situation of the elderly is thought to be less severe considering the value system, culture and the still sustaining joint family system. However, the fast changing Indian social

scenario leading to the degeneration of the joint family system, dislocation of cultural and familial bonds and loss of respect for the aged indicate that the family can no longer be a secure place for the elderly. A few Indian studies have also given strong indication as to the existence of maltreatment of the elderly in the family context (Rao, 1995; Usharani, 1989; Vijayakumar, 1991; Vlassoff and Vlassoff, 1980). Under these circumstances, the problem of elder abuse is most likely to figure as a priority area requiring attention of the scholars, policy makers and public in general.

### **Review of Studies**

Interest in elder abuse evolved from studies on other forms of family violence, especially child abuse and wife abuse during the 1970s in the West. Ever since the problem was formally recognised, there has been a growing interest among practitioners and researchers in studying it. The extant research, including studies of institutional populations and a few community population surveys (Ogg and Bennett, 1992; Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1988) taken up in the West, have uncovered cases of maltreatment of the elderly by the family members. Further, these studies provide a preliminary picture of the phenomenon — scope of the problem, the incidence, factors leading to abuse and so on — thereby providing scope for future research and research-based practice.

Though there is lack of consensus on what constitutes elder abuse, most of the researchers stipulate that an act must be intentional and should result in the infliction of physical pain or injury for it to be considered abusive (Block and Sinnott, 1979; Gelles, 1987; Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1988). Further, abuse against the elderly may involve acts of omission such as improper personal or nutritional care that more actually fall in the category of neglect, both passive and active; psychological abuse; and financial exploitation. Thus, the various dimensions of elder abuse are: physical abuse, verbal assault, physical neglect, neglect of environment, violation of rights, sexual abuse and material abuse, meaning that elder abuse may involve any act of omission or an act that can endanger the life of an elderly person. Studies have consistently indicated that the most likely victim of elder abuse is a female of very advanced age, widowed, roleless, functionally impaired and living at home with someone (Block and Sinnott, 1979; Lau and Kosberg, 1979; Steur and Austin, 1980). The dependency of elderly individuals as a major cause of abuse is widely held in the literature developed from the gerontological research on families caring

for the elderly. The dependency of the elderly, with physical or mental impairments, on the caregivers in performing daily activities of living may result in stress to the caregiver, in turn leading to abuse of the elderly unless sufficient resources are available (Block and Sinnott, 1979; Rathborne-McCuan, 1980). Contrary to these observations, financial dependency of the caretaker on the elderly was also found to be a significant factor in elder abuse.

Studies have shown that the abusers are most likely to be middle aged and usually the offspring (daughter) of the abused (Gelles, 1987). Low economic status, possessing less than high school education and holding blue collar jobs are the other reported characteristics of the abusers. Although much of the literature on elder abuse has focused on the abuse of elderly parents by adult children, it has been found that a significant proportion of elder abuse consists of spouse abuse (Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1988). Social isolation is found to be another characteristic of the families of abused elderly and the abused elderly are more likely to be isolated (Phillips, 1983; Pillemer, 1990).

The problem of elder abuse can seriously undermine the quality of life of the elderly and may have a profound effect on the moral fibre of the society. For example, deprivation of needed medicines and medical care can exacerbate the ageing process and may lead to an early death. Also, financial exploitation, though not life threatening, deprives the victim of an independent income and assets (Devi Prasad, 1996). According to Pillemer (1990), three different outcomes — physical, psychological and behavioural — might result from being a victim of elder abuse. Further, depression among victims is particularly problematic as it may prevent them from seeking alternatives to their current situation (Pillemer and Prescott, 1989).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The problem of elder abuse is going to be more serious in future in view of the changing demography of the elderly population and the policy implications it has for the care of the elderly in family and community. However, till date in India, research on ageing was primarily confined to socio-demographic profiles, problems of and services to the aged, interpersonal relationships and so on. As a result, certain areas such as elder abuse suffered selective in-attention. Therefore, there is a need for empirical studies on elder abuse in India to provide information about the problem of abuse and neglect of the elderly to guide practitioners, policy makers and planners.

Keeping these aspects in view, the present investigation was undertaken to explore the patterns of abuse and neglect of the elderly in families. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- find out the socio-demographic profile of the abused and neglected elderly;
- study the nature and patterns of abuse and neglect of the elderly in families;
- identify the factors associated with the abuse and neglect of the elderly; and
- assess the social and psychological implications of abuse and neglect of the elderly.

Further, the nature and frequency of different forms of abuse suffered by the victims during the past one year (till the date of interview) and also since they turned 60 years of age, was explored.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Setting**

The present study was taken up in Visakhapatnam city, which is popularly known as 'the city of destiny'. According to the 1991 Census, the city has a population of 7,52,037 and is considered as one of the rapidly growing cities in India. Studies have shown the increasing pressures of urbanisation and industrialisation on the families and on the relationships within the families existing in the city (for example, Vijayalakshmi and Devi Prasad, 1999). Cutting across the socioeconomic strata, instances of wife abuse, uxoricide, dowry deaths, sons beating up their parents, and other forms of family violence are often reported in the local newspapers (Rajendra Prasad, 1998; Vikram, 1998).

### **Operational Definitions**

An abused elderly, for the purpose of the study, was defined as a person aged 60 years and above, living in a family context and having a history of abuse and/or neglect by his/her family members. For the purpose of the study, four major forms of elder abuse were identified — verbal abuse, physical abuse, material abuse and neglect. Verbal abuse was defined as acts of insult, swear words or threats perpetrated against the elderly person at least two or more times in the preceding year. Physical abuse was defined as perpetrating at least one act of physical violence against the respondents, since the respondent had

turned 60 years of age. Material abuse was seen as theft or misuse of money or exploitation of the financial resources of the elderly by any of his or her family members at least once since the respondent had turned 60 years. Neglect was defined as the deprivation of assistance that the elderly needed for important activities of daily living. If this had occurred two or more times in the preceding year, for the respondent, then he or she was placed in the neglect category.

### **Sample**

In view of the sensitive nature of the topic chosen for the study, the researcher, after considering different approaches to generate the sample, adopted the following procedure. He got in touch with appropriate population groups of the aged by identifying such data sources as hospitals, geriatric health centres, pensioners' associations, informal groups of elderly who gather in parks and beaches, and the neighbourhood committees in the slums. A preliminary survey was conducted to draw a fairly mixed sample of elderly from different socioeconomic backgrounds with a history of abuse. A sample of 140 elderly (both men and women) was selected for the study. The results reported in this paper are based on the responses of these 140 elderly collected during the period from August 1995 to January 1996.

### **Data Collection Instrument**

A detailed interview schedule was used to collect data from the sample elderly. The schedule covered major aspects such as profiles of the abused and the abuser; health and physical condition of the elderly and support from the family members; psychological well-being of the elderly; issues leading to abuse and neglect of elderly; and details of material abuse. The schedule also utilised the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) to measure verbal and physical abuse. The CTS consists of a list of 19 items, which a family member adopts while confronting a conflict situation with another family member. The items in the Scale start with those acts which are less coercive (for example, discussing the issue calmly with others) and gradually moves to more coercive and more aggressive forms of tactics towards the end of the list (for example, using sharp instrument or knife against the elderly). Accordingly, the items are grouped under 3 sub-scales — use of rational discussion, verbal aggression and physical violence. Each item asks if the mode was employed ever since the respondent had turned 60 years of age. It also asks for the number of times each action occurred

during the past year, which may range from never to 10 or more times. Frequencies were calculated from these data.

### **Reliability**

Reliability of the CTS was determined by both split-half and test-retest methods. Both these were administered to 30 respondents. The split-half analysis scores of these 30 respondents were taken and the items of the CTS were divided into two halves on odd-even criteria. A product moment correlation-coefficient of internal reliability of the Scale was computed using the Spearman-Brown formula<sup>1</sup> to correct for attenuation in the split-half test. Also, a retest was conducted for the same 30 respondents after 30 days of the conduct of the first test. The reliability of the Scale (abuse patterns since the elderly turned 60 years) was  $r=0.87$  for the split-half method and for test-retest method it was 0.95. As regards the reliability of the Scale in measuring abusive behaviour during the past one year (till the date of interview), it was  $r=0.9$  for both the split-half method and for test-retest method. The reliability co-efficient ( $y_{xx}$ ) came to 0.93 (abuse patterns since the elderly turned 60 years) and 0.97 (abusive behaviour during the past one year till the date of interview).

## **FINDINGS**

### **The Abused**

Of the total sample, 52.9 per cent were women and 47.1 per cent were men. The mean age of the sample population came to 66 years with a majority of the sample respondents falling in the age range of 60-67 years. There was a large percentage of Hindus (86.4) in the study sample, because Hinduism is the predominant religion in Visakhapatnam. More than half of the respondents belong to backward classes (53.5 per cent). However, a significant number are from other castes (34.3 per cent) and a few are from scheduled castes (11 per cent). As regards the marital status, around 85 per cent of the women were widows in contrast to majority of the men (71.2 per cent), who had a living spouse. A large number of the respondents had some schooling or collegiate education. In fact, about 16.7 per cent of them were graduates or above. However, as compared to men (16.7 per cent), a majority of the women were illiterate (75.6 per cent). Similarly, as compared to men (31.8 per cent), only one woman was a graduate. A sizeable number of respondents came from high income families, that is, Rs.

6,000/- and above, though the majority were from low income families (56.4 per cent families had an income less than Rs. 2,000/- per month). Of the dependants with no income, women were more (44.6 per cent) as compared to men (12.1 per cent) (Table 1).

**TABLE 1: Background Characteristics of the Sample Elderly by Sex**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Men (n=66)</i>	<i>Women (n=74)</i>	<i>Total Percent</i>
Age (in years)			
60-63	31.8	54.0	43.6
64-67	22.7	28.4	25.7
68-71	15.2	<b>13.5</b>	14.3
72-75	19.7	2.7	10.7
76 and above	10.6	1.4	5.7
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	97.0	<b>77.0</b>	86.4
Christian	3.0	20.3	12.2
Muslim		2.7	1.4
Caste			
Other castes	51.5	18.9	34.3
Backward classes	43.9	62.	53.6
Scheduled caste	4.6	16.2	10.7
Others*		2.7	1.4
Marital Status			
Married	71.2	10.8	39.3
Widowed	28.8	85.	58.6
Separated or divorced		4.1	2.1
Education			
Illiterate	16.7	75.6	47.9
Primary	16.7	<b>18.9</b>	17.9
Secondary	22.7	1.4	11.4
PUC/Inter mediate	10.6	2.7	6.4
Technical	1.5		0.7
Graduate and above	31.8	1.4	15.7
Family income (in Rs. per month)			
Below 1000	9.2	43.3	27.1
1001-2000	24.2	33.8	29.3
2001-4000	28.8	17.5	22.8
4001-6000	15.1	2.7	8.6
6001 and above	22.7	2.7	12.2
Respondent's income (in Rs. per month)			
No income	12.1	<b>44.6</b>	29.3
Below 500	4.6	25.7	15.7
501 - 1000	24.2	24.3	24.3
1001-2000	34.9	4.1	18.6
2001 and above	24.2	1.4	12.1

*Note:* This category includes the Muslim respondents.

## The Abuser

The respondents were asked to mention the person most difficult to get along with in their family and his/her relationship with them. Both men and women (37.9 per cent and 33.3 per cent respectively), the son as the most frequent abuser. As against men (13.7 per cent), more women (36.5 per cent) reported that their daughter-in-law was the most abusive family member. It was the husband who often reported being abused by the wife (33.3 per cent), whereas the reverse was reported to be as less as only four per cent. The middle aged person (mean age=37 years) appears to be frequently the abuser. The abusers included an almost equal number of men and women and a majority of them were married (81.4 per cent). About 30 per cent had collegiate education. The abusers were from a variety of occupations, and included housewives and unemployed who comprised 38.6 per cent and **11.4** per cent, respectively. However, almost half of them (48.6 per cent) did not have an income of their own (See Table 2). In fact, some of the abusers were financially very dependent (19.3 per cent) or somewhat dependent (19.3 per cent) on the sample elderly.

TABLE 2: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Abuser

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Sex</b>		
Men	71	50.7
Women	69	49.3
<b>Age (in years)</b>		
Below 20	7	5.0
21 - 30	31	22.1
31 - 40	61	43.6
41 - 50	22	15.7
51 and above	19	13.6
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	114	81.4
Unmarried	19	13.6
Widow (er)	4	2.9
Separated	3	2.1
<b>Education</b>		
Had no education	46	32.8
Primary education	26	18.6
Secondary education	26	18.6
Collegiate Education	42	30.0

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Government Service	11	7.9
Professional	8	5.7
Business - small	9	6.4
Skilled labour	10	7.2
Unskilled labour	20	14.3
House wife	54	38.6
Unemployed	16	11.4
Others*	12	18.5
<b>Income (in Rs. per month)</b>		
No income	68	48.6
Below 1000	30	21.4
1001-2000	17	12.1
3001-4000	13	9.4
4001 and above	5	3.5

*Note:* N = 140

\* Others include teachers (2), clerical (8), retired (1) and business (1).

## **Patterns of Abuse**

The study attempted at ascertaining the four major patterns of abuse that is, physical abuse, verbal abuse, neglect and material abuse. Verbal abuse is the most frequently reported form of abuse followed by material abuse and neglect. Physical abuse is also reported by a sizeable number of respondents. Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents by the categories of abuse they suffered in their family context.

**TABLE 3: Distribution of the Sample Elderly by Patterns of Abuse**

<i>Type of Abuse</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Verbal abuse	113	80.7
Physical abuse	32	22.9
Neglect	74	52.9
Material abuse	52	37.1

*Note:* N=140

## **Verbal Abuse**

A majority of the sample population reported that their abusers had said some thing to spite them (80 per cent) and insulted or sworn at them (36.4 per cent) during the past one year. Further, they were threatened physically (7.2 per cent), which lead to their humiliation.

*Physical Abuse*

Pushing, grabbing or shoving (17 per cent); trying to slap or to hit (10.7 per cent); and hitting or trying to hit with something (10 per cent) were the frequently reported patterns of physical abuse. A few sample population also reported that their abusers beat them up (6.4 per cent) and locked them in some place (4.2 per cent) (Table 4).

**TABLE 4: Details of Physical Abuse**

<i>Abusive behaviour</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence in the past year</i>				<i>Frequency of Occurrence since the Elderly turned 60 years</i>
	<i>Once</i>	<i>2-10 times</i>	<i>More than 10 times</i>	<i>Total</i>	
<b>Threw something at elderly</b>	2.6	1.4	3.6	7.1	8.6
<b>Tried to slap or hit elderly</b>	2.8	4.3	3.6	10.7	12.9
<b>Pushed, grabbed, or shoved elderly</b>	5.7	6.4	2.8	14.9	17.0
<b>Slapped elderly</b>	1.4	1.4	2.1	4.9	6.4
<b>Kicked, bit or hit with fist</b>	1.4	5.0	1.4	7.8	8.6
<b>Hit or tried to hit with something</b>	2.1	5.7	1.4	9.2	10.0
<b>Beat up</b>	1.4	2.1	1.4	4.9	6.4
<b>Threatened elderly with a knife or a sharp instrument</b>	—	—	0.7	0.7	1.4
<b>Locked the elderly in some place</b>	1.4	1.4	0.7	4.2	4.2
<b>Tied elderly to chair or bed</b>	0.7	—	0.7	1.4	1.4

*Note:* N = 140

*Neglect*

About 37 per cent of the sample population reported that they were neglected by their family members. A majority reported that they were frequently neglected, that is two to six times (49.1 per cent) and 7-10 times (45.5 per cent) during the past one year. In a majority of cases (65.4 per cent) the neglect was reported to be somewhat serious, whereas in about 25 per cent of cases it was serious.

*Material Abuse*

A majority of sample population (52.9 per cent) reported to having been subjected to material abuse at least once since they turned 60 years of age. A significant number of the elderly reported that their abusers had tried to convince them to give money (73 per cent);

persuaded them to let the abuser handle their finances (45 per cent); or sign over ownership of the house (36.5 per cent); and cheated or tricked them elderly for money (31 per cent).

### Factors Associated with Elder Abuse

The association between some of the demographic variables of the abused and their abuser was tested. Factors such as sex, marital status and dependency of the abused seem to be having a greater association with elder abuse.

#### *Sex*

Both men and women most frequently reported verbal abuse (77.3 per cent and 83.8 per cent respectively). The data also indicated that more women were subjected to physical abuse and neglect as against their male counterparts and more so in terms of physical abuse (33.8 per cent of women as against 10.6 per cent of men). However, material abuse was more against men (61.2 per cent) than women (39.2 per cent). This could be because more men had an income of their own and had assets.

**TABLE 5: Distribution of Respondents by Sex and Types of Abuse Suffered**

<i>Type of Abuse</i>	<i>Men (n=66)</i>	<i>Women (n=74)</i>	<i>Total Percentage</i>
Verbal abuse	77.3	83.8	80.7
Physical abuse	10.6	33.8	22.9
Neglect	31.8	41.9	37.1
Material abuse	61.2	39.2	52.9

#### *Marital Status*

Table 6 shows that the widowed are more frequently subjected to all forms of abuse, particularly to physical abuse and neglect (30.4 per cent and 43.9 respectively) compared to the respondents whose spouse is alive (10.9 per cent and 29.1 per cent respectively). It was also observed that more widows are subjected to verbal abuse and to material abuse (84.1 per cent and 41.3 per cent respectively) than the women whose husbands were alive (74.5 per cent and 37.5 per cent). Further, the widowers were more frequently physically abused (21 per cent) than the married men (6.4 per cent).

TABLE 6: Details of Abuse by Marital Status and Sex

Type of Abuse	Marital Status					
	Married			Widowed		
	Men (N=47)	Women (n=8)	Total (n=55)	Men (n=19)	Women (n=63)	Total (n=82)
Verbal abuse	74.5	75.0	74.5	84.2	84.1	84.1
Physical abuse	6.4	37.5	10.9	21.0	33.3	30.4
Neglect	25.5	50.0	29.1	47.3	47.3	43.9
Material abuse	66.0	37.5	61.8	7.4	7.4	64.5

### Dependency

It is found that those elderly who were dependent on their family members for performing their activities related to daily living were at the risk of abuse and neglect. This was more so in the case of women. The data also showed that even among the elderly who were capable of attending to their personal chores, women were more at risk of verbal abuse (80 per cent) and material abuse (40 per cent). As regards neglect of the elderly, more dependent women (57.4 per cent) were found to be at risk as compared to dependent men (33.3 per cent). Both men and women who were independent in their daily activities were free from any neglect (Table 7).

TABLE 7: Dependency of Elderly in their Activities of Daily Living by Types of Abuse

Type of Abuse	Dependency					
	Dependent			Independent		
	Men (N=63)	Women (n=54)	Total (n=117)	Men (n=3)	Women (n=20)	Total (n=23)
Verbal abuse	79.4	85.2	82.0	33.3	80.0	73.9
Physical abuse	9.5	38.8	23.1	33.3	20.0	21.7
Neglect	33.3	57.4	44.4	-	-	-
Material abuse	66.6	38.8	53.8	100.0	40.0	47.8

Note: N=140

### Implications of Abuse and Neglect for the Elderly

When asked how happy they were, a large number of the sample elderly reported that they were not happy at all (40.7 per cent) or a little unhappy (45 per cent). More women (55.4 per cent) reported to be not happy at all in contrast to men (24.3 per cent). A significant number of the sample elderly (45.7 per cent) expressed that they had no one to

trust or believe in, though they were living with their families at the time of the study. A majority of the sample population, of both men and women (30.3 per cent and 62.1 per cent respectively), were found to be often lacking in enthusiasm and reported poor appetite (47 per cent and 64.8 per cent) and disturbed sleeping patterns (59.1 per cent and 85.2 per cent). Further, they felt confused, powerless and helpless and became increasingly dependent on others. A sizeable number of the sample population (28.6 per cent) reported to have considered ending their lives. These suicidal intentions/ideas were reported by both men (19.7 per cent) and women (36.5 per cent), thereby indicating that the psychological well-being of women was worse than that of men.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions drawn from the findings are confined to the study sample as the data were gathered from a purposive sample with the related characteristics. However, some general observations, when supported by findings of extant research, were made within the limitations mentioned above. The findings of the study indicated that the widowed and women living with their children have been abused in more the families. Similar observations were made in the studies taken up in the United States, Canada and other Western countries, where the typical victim of elder abuse was depicted as widowed, roleless and functionally impaired and usually living with someone (Block and Sinnott, 1979; Lau and Kosberg, 1978; Pedric-Cornell and Gelles, 1982). The results of the present study indicate that age of the respondent and economic circumstances in the family have no bearing on the risk of being abused. As regards educational background, though a large number of the respondents are illiterates, there are a few who are graduates or have higher qualifications.

The son, the daughter-in-law and the spouse, in that order, were frequently reported to be the abusers. In the Indian context, traditionally, the elderly would prefer to live with the married son. In most cases women, particularly the daughters-in-law, take care of the dependants, including the elderly in their family. This might be the reason for the son and daughter-in-law being frequently reported as abusers. In the case of spouses being reported as abusers, more women were reported to be subjecting their husbands to abuse and neglect with the reverse being observed less frequently. This could be because, usually, husbands are older than their wives and tend to

become dependent on the relatively younger wife for their daily activities of living. Moreover, the wife burdened by the dependent husband at her advanced age may become abusive. This finding strengthens the argument that elder abuse is much more by the spouse than by the child (Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1998). Financial dependency of the abuser on the victim is also found to be associated with risk of the latter being abused, as abusers were reportedly somewhat (19.3 per cent) to very dependent (19.3 per cent), financially, on the victims. Pillemer (1985) has also made similar observations.

Verbal abuse was the most frequently reported form of abuse, followed by material abuse. Shouting at the elderly and insulting them were often observed. The elderly were physically abused by way of pushing, grabbing, shoving, and so on. A few of them were also being hit with something, beaten up and locked in some place. However, not many were subjected to such forms of severe physical abuse. It may be observed from the findings that the elderly were subjected to various forms of verbal and physical abuse. Further, neglect was reported as a form of abuse in a significant number of cases (25 per cent). The findings revealed that these abusive experiences had negative outcomes for the elderly which include lack of enthusiasm, disturbed eating and sleep problems, feeling of powerlessness and of isolation. Neglect and material abuse of the elderly though not life threatening may deprive the elderly from fulfilling their basic needs such as food, medicines, and so on, and also create feelings of insecurity. The feeling of being unwanted and having no one to trust in the family appears to be resulting in suicidal ideas in a sizeable number of the sample population.

Though the problem of elder abuse has come to light only in the recent past in the Indian context, with the changing demographics, the situation of the elderly, particularly in the family context, is expected to further exacerbate. Therefore, there is an urgent need to formulate strategies which would ensure a better quality of life to the elderly. Provision of services such as adult day care, domestic assistance, mobile geriatric health services, and home nursing care would reduce the stress of the caregiver and the resultant abuse of the elderly. Programmes are to be so designed that they have scope for participation of the elderly to reduce their social isolation. Creating awareness among the elderly regarding the steps they can take to address the instances of maltreatment in the family context could be very useful in view of the existing 'no reporting and under reporting' of elder abuse

cases. In the absence of reliable data about incidence and different forms of elder abuse, there is a need for research using large and representative samples, which has scope for arriving at estimates of incidence and prevalence rates of abuse and provide deeper insights into the problem of elder abuse.

## NOTE

$$1. \quad \gamma_{xx} \frac{2\gamma_{oe}}{1 + \gamma_{oe}}$$

where  $\gamma_{xx}$  = reliability and  $\gamma_{oe}$  = the correlation between scores on the odd and even items.

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