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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### ELDER ABUSE IN FAMILY: A CROSS SECTIONAL COMMUNITY BASED STUDY IN RURAL SOLAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

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#### Abstract

**Background:** India's aging population is projected to grow significantly, emphasizing the need to address elder abuse, which has severe consequences and is associated with increased mortality and morbidity.

**Objectives:** This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of elder abuse, analyze patterns and associated factors among elder in rural Solapur.

**Methodology:** A community-based observational study was conducted on elder individuals residing in a Primary Health Centre's headquarters village in Solapur. By simple random sampling 279 elder residing in Headquarter village of a randomly selected Primary Health Centre in Solapur district were selected. Elder abuse was assessed through structured questionnaires, excluding sexual abuse.

**Results:** The prevalence of elder abuse in the past year was found to be 24.73%, with psychological abuse being the most common type of abuse found in 20.43% elder. Neglect, financial abuse and physical abuse were 16.12%, 7.52% and 4.30% respectively. Factors significantly associated with elder abuse included gender, marital status, occupation, personal income and possession of property. Higher prevalence of abuse was observed among females, widowed individuals, currently working elders, those with lower incomes, and those without property or assets.

**Conclusions:** Elder abuse in family environment was found to be occurring in rural area of Solapur, with every fourth elder being abused. Present study highlights the importance of addressing elder abuse, especially psychological abuse, among rural elder populations.

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#### Introduction:-

India's elder population is projected to touch 194 million in 2031: a 41% increase over a decade.<sup>1</sup> National Policy for senior citizens 2011, focuses to protect senior citizen from abuse and exploitation, along with implementation of stringent punishment for abuse of the elder.<sup>2</sup> Elder abuse has devastating consequences for older persons. It is also associated with increased mortality and morbidity.<sup>3</sup> The older people, who may be suffering additional health problems, are more vulnerable to death caused by abuse. Also mortalities in elder that may have originated from abuse are simply overlooked. Understanding the magnitude of elder abuse is a crucial first step in the public health

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approach to prevent this type of violence.<sup>5</sup> There is both lack of awareness and doubts about the validity of current estimates of the prevalence of abuse of older people.<sup>6</sup> So to the present study was conducted in rural part of Solapur District

**Objectives:-**

1. To estimate the prevalence of elder abuse in rural area
2. To study type and pattern and factors associated with elder abuse

**Methods:-****Study design:**

A community based Observational Descriptive Cross Sectional study.

**Study population:**

Elders living in area of a headquarter village of a Primary Health Centre in rural Solapur.

**Sampling frame:**

All elder aged  $\geq 60$  residing in a headquarter village of a Primary Health Centre in Solapur.

**Sample size:**

Based on prevalence of 20.8% abuse in elder<sup>7</sup> with precision level of 5% and level of significance set at 5% with 95% confidence interval, the sample size was calculated by formula:  $n = Z^2 pq/d^2$  which was 253, after adding 26 for non response, the calculated sample size was 279.

**Sampling Method:**

Simple random sampling. There were 77 primary health centres (PHC) in Solapur district. One PHC was selected randomly. The list of all elder persons aged 60 and above residing in PHC head quarter village was prepared from data of population based survey prepared for National Programme for Prevention & Control of Non-communicable Diseases. By simple random sampling elders were interviewed along with clinical examination & investigations, maintaining privacy, comfort and convenience and timing suitable to elders during November 2023.

**Inclusion criterion:**

1. Elder > 60 years residing in study area for more than two years.
2. Elder > 60 years willing to participate in study.

**Exclusion criterion:**

Elder who were not able to respond due to any debilitating illness.

**Operational definition of elder abuse:**

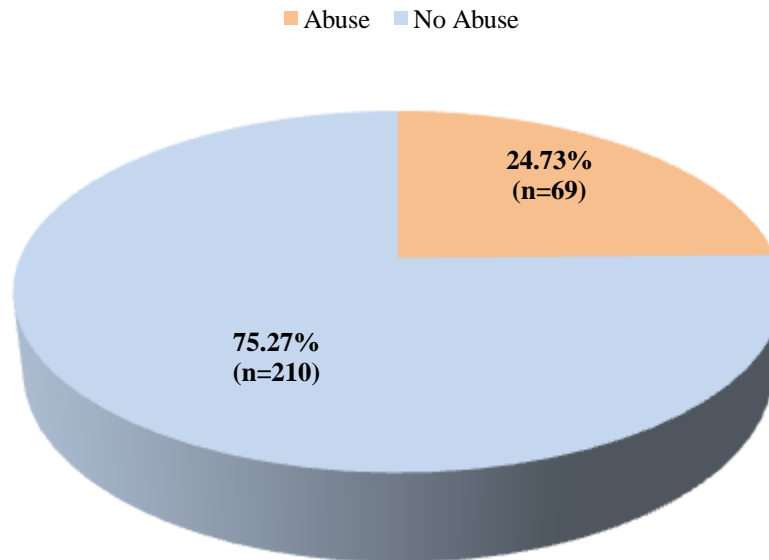
Derived from WHO definition for elder abuse.<sup>8</sup>

**Elder abuse –**

Was defined as “a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any familial relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to a person aged 60 years and above, where perpetrator is younger than 60 years, and elder is not in marital relation with perpetrator”. Similarly type and pattern of abuse was downsized upsized from various categories as given by WHO. Elder abuse in family environment in last one year, in four types namely physical abuse, financial abuse, psychological abuse and neglect was obtained using pretested structured questionnaire. Further each type of abuse with different pattern was interviewed. Sexual abuse was excluded in present study as it has wider implications.

**Statistical Analysis:**

Master sheet was prepared using Microsoft Excel office 2007. Analysis done using Epi Info 7. Appropriate tests applied. Statistical significant set at P value <0.05.

**Results:-****Fig. no.1:-** Prevalence of elder abuse in family environment in last one year (n=279).

The figure no. 1 shows prevalence of elder abuse in family environment in last one year. Out of 279 elders 69 (24.73%) were abused in last one year.

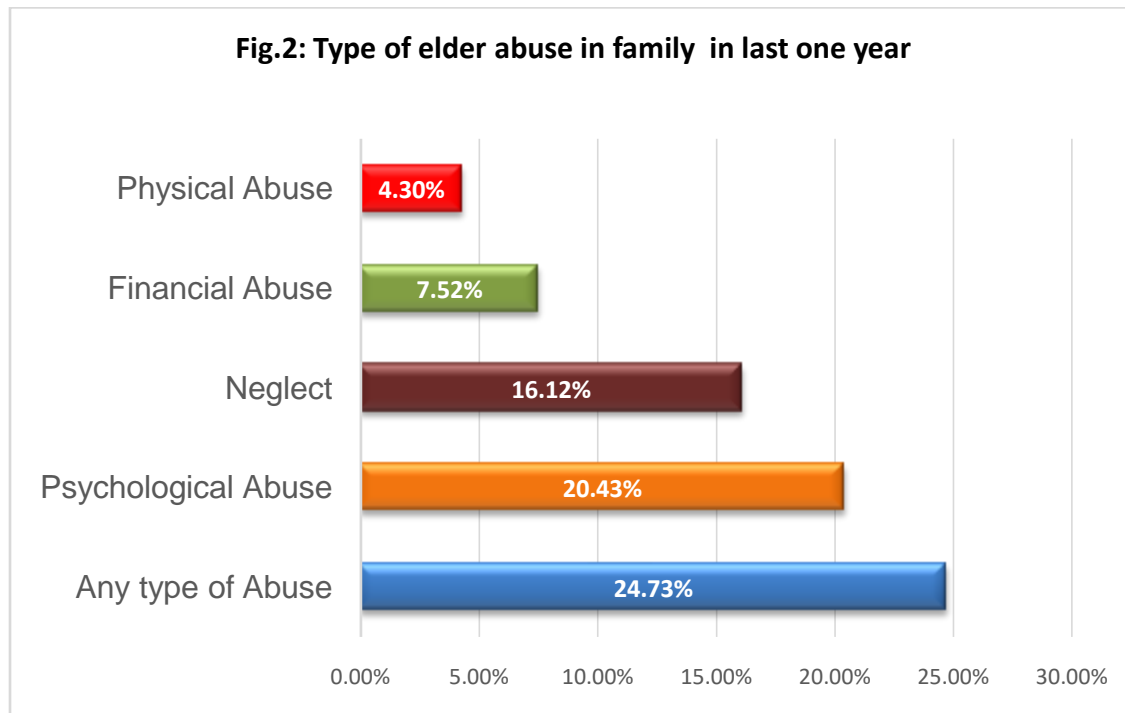


Figure no. 2 shows type of elder abuse in last one year. Psychological abuse was reported by majority of 57 (20.43%) elder. Neglect was reported by 45 (16.12%) elder. Elder facing financial abuse were 21 (7.52%), while only 12 (4.30%) elder reported physical abuse in last one year. In total 69 (24.73%) elders faced any type of abuse in last year.

**Table 1:-** Type of abuse and pattern of abuse in elder (n=69).

Type of abuse (n)	Pattern of abuse	No.	%
Physical abuse (12)	Grabbed, pushed or shoved	9	13.04
	Hit with fist/kick etc.	3	4.34
Psychological abuse (57)	Excluded or repeatedly ignored	30	43.47
	Undermined or belittled elder	27	39.13
	Insulted or called bad names	9	13.04
	Prevented from seeing others that elder care	3	4.34
Financial abuse (21)	Take away money, possession's or property	18	26.08
	Make elder give money, possession's or property	3	4.34
	Elder didn't get money for purchase of petty things	3	4.34
Neglect (45)	Did not followed decisions of elder	39	56.52
	Do not prepared food elder like and can eat	12	17.39
	Not helped elder in daily activities of life	3	4.34
	Not helped to get correct dose & timing of medicine	3	4.34

Table no. 1 shows type of abuse and pattern of abuse faced by elder in last one year. In physically abused 12 elders, 9 (13.04%) were grabbed, pushed or shoved while 3 (4.34%) were hit physically. In psychological abuse maximum 30 (43.47%) were excluded or repeatedly ignored followed by 27 (39.13%) who were undermined or belittled. 9 (13.04%) were insulted or were called by bad names while 3 (4.34%) were prevented from seeing others that elder care for like daughters or grand children. In financial abuse taking away money or possessions or property of elder was reported by 18(26.08%) while equal 3 (4.34%) elder reported that they forced to give away money, possessions or property and did not get money for purchase of petty things they needed. In Neglect, the second more prevalent type of abuse after psychological abuse, most 39(56.52%) elder were felt neglected as their decisions were not followed by family member while 12(17.39%) were not getting food they like and can eat. An equal number of elder 3 (4.43%) reported neglect in form of not being helped in activities of daily life and not getting correct doses or correct timing for medications

**Table no. 2:-** Characteristics of elder and factors associated with elder abuse.

Factor		Total (279)	Elder without abuse No. (%)	Abused elder No. (%)	Chi Square	p value
Age group	60 to 70	192	138 (71.88)	54 (28.12)	3.81	0.050
	> 70	87	72 (82.76)	15 (17.24)		
Gender	Female	102	63 (61.77)	39 (38.23)	15.75	0.000*
	Male	177	147 (83.06)	30 (16.94)		
Marital status	Currently Married	243	192 (79.02)	51 (20.98)	14.17	0.000*
	Widow and widower	36	18 (50.00)	18 (50.00)		
Occupation	Currently Working	96	54 (56.25)	42 (43.75)	28.44	0.000*
	Retired/Not working	183	156 (85.25)	27 (14.75)		

Personal Income	< ₹ 10,000	126	75 (59.53)	51 (40.47)	30.59	0.000*
	> ₹ 10,000	153	135 (88.24)	18 (11.76)		
Socio-economic Status	Upper & Upper middle class	171	123 (71.93)	48 (28.07)	2.64	0.103
	Lower middle & Lower class	108	87 (80.56)	21 (19.44)		
Personal property	No property or assets	21	12 (57.15)	9 (42.85)	4.00	0.045*
	Hold property or assets	258	198(76.75)	60 (23.25)		
Type of family	Nuclear	48	36 (75.00)	12 (25.00)	0.002	0.964
	Joint and 3 generation	231	174 (75.33)	57 (24.67)		

\* Statistically significant: p value < 0.05

Table no. 2 shows characteristics of elder and various factors associated with elder abuse. There were 192 (68.82%) elder in age group 60 to 70 years and 87 (31.18%) in age group above 70 years. More elder 54 (28.12%) in age group 60 to 70 years were abused than elder which were above 70 years 15 (17.24%) but there wasn't any significant association between age group and elder abuse. Among 102 females 39 (38.23%) were abused compared to 30 (16.94%) amongst 177 males and being of female gender was found to be statistically significant factor for elder abuse. Marital status as widow or widower was found to be significantly associated with abuse as 18 (50.00%) were abused against only 51 (20.98%) who were currently married elders. Elders currently working were 96 of which 42 (43.75%) reported abuse. Among 183 those who were retired or not working currently, only 27 (14.75%) were abused. It was seen that currently working elder faced abuse significantly. Among 126 elders more 51(40.47%) having personal income less than ₹ 10,000 were abused compared to 18 (11.76%) elders among 153 who had income more than ₹ 10,000. Personal income of elder less than ₹ 10,000 was significantly associated with abuse. There were 123 elder from upper and upper middle socio economic class and 153 from lower middle and lower socioeconomic class. Although abuse was slightly higher in upper & upper middle socio economic class 48(28.07%), there wasn't any significant difference in abuse faced by 21 (19.44%) elder from lower middle and lower class. Out of 21 elder who did not had property or assets 9 (42.85%) were abused as compared to 60 (23.25%) amongst 258 who had property or assets. Holding property or assets was significant protective factor from abuse. A total 12 (25.00%) elders among 48 from nuclear type of family faced abuse compared to 57 (24.67%) amongst 231 elders belonging to joint and 3 generation family. There wasn't any significant association between type of family and elder abuse, the abuse being equally proportionate amongst elders from different family types.

## Discussion:-

The prevalence of elder abuse in the family environment in the present study conducted in a headquarter village of a primary health centre in rural Solapur was 24.73%, comparable to rates found in India, China, and Nigeria<sup>10-13</sup>, but lower than those reported in Canada and Turkey.<sup>15-16</sup> Differences in findings may be attributed to variations in study methodologies, including the exclusion of inter-partner abuse and abuse outside the familial relationship. Psychological abuse was the most prevalent type, followed by neglect, financial abuse, and physical abuse, consistent with previous research in India and Turkey.<sup>11,12,16</sup> Extent of elder abuse did not significantly differ across age groups, aligning with findings from several studies.<sup>13,15,16</sup> Female gender was significantly associated with abuse, as observed in various countries.<sup>11,12,15-16,19</sup> However in China<sup>13</sup> gender wasn't associated with abuse significantly. Widowed individuals were more abused compared to currently married individuals, although some studies reported conflicting results regarding marital status and abuse.<sup>12-14,17</sup> Elder abuse decreased significantly with an increase in personal monthly income, consistent with some previous research.<sup>12,20</sup> However, disparities exist in findings regarding the association between income and abuse in different studies.<sup>16</sup> Prevalence of abuse was higher among currently working individuals compared to retired subjects and similar finding was noted in a report on the status of elder in select states of India<sup>17</sup> but in contrast with findings of Sebastian D et al.<sup>12</sup> There more prevalence observed among currently working elders may have reflected abuse in female homemakers where gender itself was strongly associated with abuse. Socioeconomic status also played a role, with higher prevalence observed among middle socioeconomic classes and difference in proportion of abuse across different socio economic class is also reported Gaikwad V et al<sup>11</sup> and Acierno R et al.<sup>21</sup> Elder individuals with less immovable property and assets were more abused, consistent with findings from some previous studies.<sup>12</sup> This suggests that property ownership may act as a protective factor against abuse.

**Limitations:**

The study was conducted in a single rural area of Solapur, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other rural or urban settings. Elder abuse was assessed on self-reporting by the elder, may introduce response bias, as some participants may underreport or misinterpret instances of abuse. Sexual abuse, a significant form of elder abuse, was excluded from the study due to its sensitive nature and broader implications. This limits the comprehensiveness of the findings regarding different forms of elder abuse. The study utilized a cross-sectional design, which provides a snapshot of the prevalence of elder abuse at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies would provide a better understanding of the trends and dynamics of elder abuse over time. Social Desirability Bias-Participants may have provided socially desirable responses, particularly regarding sensitive topics such as abuse, leading to underreporting or over reporting.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:-**

Despite its limitations, this study sheds light on the prevalence, patterns, and factors associated with elder abuse among rural elder populations in Solapur. Elder abuse in family environment was found to be occurring in rural area of Solapur, which approximates other studies, with every fourth elder being abused. Psychological abuse of elder is most prevalent type of abuse. Gender, Marital status, Personal monthly income, and personal possession of property significantly associated with elder abuse. The findings underscore the significance of addressing elder abuse, particularly psychological abuse, which was found to be the most common type. Further research, including longitudinal studies and investigations into underexplored forms of elder abuse, is warranted to inform more comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies.

**Conflicts of interest:**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

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Nil.

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