

Hidden Victims: Patterns of Elder abuse and neglect in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Old Age is a part of life cycle confronted with many social issues. This research focuses on the Abusive experiences of elders in Sri Lanka particularly about the abuse patterns. WHO 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". Elder abuse can take various forms such as financial, physical, psychological and sexual. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect. In this research we explore patterns, trends and social experience of victims of elder abuse using a random sample of 30 elders living in a government eldercare center located in Gampaha district Sri Lanka. Respondents of the sample represent eight districts in the country and inmates were served six months to five years in the caregiving center. Structured interview method was implemented to gather data along with a brief questionnaire. According to the results 33% had experienced physical abuse such as Hitting, Pushing and Burning. By the type of physical abusers highest number (13.3%) reported from relatives along with 6.3% from their own children. Psychological abusive experience is more prominent among the elders and Scolding, threatening, Shaming and humiliation were identified. From the total sample 46.7 % reported they were neglected. Only 6.7% reported about their victimization.

Keywords: Elder abuse, Neglect, Victimization