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Prevalence and Risk Factors of Elderly Abuse in Family Environment

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KEYWORDS

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Prevalence of elderly abuse
Risk factor
Risk factor models

ABSTRACT

Elder abuse in the family is a widespread and challenging issue in society. The purpose of this study is to look into the prevalence of elderly abuse in the family environment of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City, as well as the risk factors that influence it. A survey of 412 elders was conducted using simple random sampling. The data was gathered using a structured face-to-face interview schedule. Descriptive and binary logistic regression analysis was used to analyses the collected data. The descriptive and inferential analysis of the collected data demonstrated that elderly abuse occurred in 35.90% of the study population. Elders with functional disability had the highest odds ratio (binary logistic regression) of being abused (12.13 times), followed by living without a spouse (4.44 times), elders without property ownership (3.84 times), and illiteracy (3.06 times), according to the study. Although the prevalence in this study was lower than in many previous studies, the prevalence of 35.90 percent is still significantly high and should be avoided. The study discovered a significant use of social exchange theory and Foucault's view on power in describing Nepalese social behavior. Having a functional disability, living without a spouse, not owning property, and being illiterate are the major predictors of elderly abuse, according to the study. The study emphasizes the importance of policies and programmes aimed at preventing elder abuse, which undoubtedly necessitates collaboration between the social, health, and justice sectors. In Nepalese society, functional disability, living without a spouse, not owning property, and being illiterate are major predictors of elder abuse. To prevent elder abuse, policies and programmes are required, as well as collaborative action from the social, health, and justice sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process characterized by physiological decline, and individuals exhibiting physical changes associated with aging are considered biologically aged (Randel et al., 1999).

According to the Geriatric Centre of Nepal (GCN), "In Nepal, individuals aged over 60 years of age are considered elderly" (p. 8). Elder abuse and neglect are significant socio-economic issues that we face today. According to Tomita (1983), addressing elderly abuse is a difficult issue since it often occurs within the bounds of the family, away from public scrutiny. Elder abuse is a big issue globally, according to Patel et al. (2021), with numerous sorts of abuse including psychological, neglect, economic, physical, and sexual abuse. The frequency of elder abuse varies by category. According to McDonald and Sharma (2011), older people are more prone to abuse due to poor physical and mental health, gender, and living arrangements. The disintegration of conventional family structures in metropolitan settings has aggravated the problem (Gaur & Kaur, 2004). According to Singh (2014), the ageing population is quickly increasing, especially in emerging nations, posing difficulties to the well-being of the elderly. Elderly people frequently rely on their offspring, yet shifts in society norms and family structures have raised the possibility of abuse (Govil & Gupta, 2016).

The global aging population has raised concerns due to its social, economic, and political implications (Wolf, 1997). Elder abuse, a widespread problem across the world, is frequently disregarded because elderly people are perceived as disempowered and un-resourceful. With the processes of urbanization, industrialization, and modernization, the care and well-being of elderly people have become major societal problems. Old age is related with the phases of retirement and renunciation in Hinduism (Tiwari & Pandey, 2013).

Elder abuse is a significant human rights violation that has a detrimental impact on the health and well-being of older people. Unfortunately, elder abuse is frequently underreported, and there is a lack of data and documentation (Sachan, 2016). Reporting abuse is considered a family crime in Nepal, resulting in underreporting. The demographic divide, conventional thinking, adjustment issues, and disrespectful behavior towards older generations all contribute to the problem of elder abuse (Chalise & Basnet, 2017).

The research analyses social interactions involving commodities and services using George C. Homans's social exchange theory (created in 1950). According to the idea, individuals seek to maximize self-interest by assessing costs and rewards in trades. People's power shifts as they age owing to dwindling resources, leaving them exposed to uneven exchanges that influence fundamental necessities (Dowd, 1975). The theory focuses on understanding power and exchanges within families and communities, demonstrating how older people lose decision-making capacities, perhaps leading to abuse by family members (Mathew and Nair, 2017).

The existing literature on elder abuse acknowledges the subject's importance, but quantitative prevalence studies in this field are lacking (Yon et al., 2017). Furthermore, Nepal lacks adequate study on issues affecting the older population (Chalise and Basnet, 2017). GCN (2010) proposed a baseline survey with numerous variables to measure the health of the elderly. Despite these current studies, there are significant study gaps in identifying the risk factors for elder abuse and addressing newly emerging problems. This research intends to fulfill these gaps and contribute to a better knowledge of elder abuse and associated concerns in Nepal.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this research was to examine the prevalence of elder abuse within families. Additionally, the study sought to identify the influencing factors that contribute to the occurrence of elder abuse.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

This study has formulated following hypothesis: -

H_1: The socio-demographic factors (age, sex, family size and spousal living status, literacy, functional disability status, income and property ownership

status) can predict elderly abuse

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The positivist paradigm governed the research, which emphasizes objectivity, empiricism, and the application of scientific procedures to explore phenomena. The ontological standing of this research argued the presence of a single, objective world that can be explored and comprehended using scientific methods. The study was based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is obtained from visible and quantifiable facts, and that this information may be used to create predictions and test hypotheses. This research prioritizes information and truth over subjective interpretation or personal ideas. This study, based on the positivist paradigm, provides a rigorous and methodical approach to investigation, with a heavy focus on objectivity and reliance on empirical data. A cross-sectional survey design was used to answer the study question. The research was carried out in the Hetauda sub-metropolitan city, with a target population of 16,489 people. To determine the appropriate sample size, Rugg and Peter (2007) recommended the formula n' = 1.9622 * P (1-P) / (standard error) ^2. A sample size of 375 was generated based on this calculation and to meet the appropriate degree of statistical confidence. To account for probable non-response, a further estimate was developed based on the findings of a pilot research, with a non-response rate of 9%. As a result, the final sample size for this study was 412, and the participants were chosen using a basic random selection procedure.

To acquire the essential information from the sample, the researchers used a systematic interview schedule. 376 people were interviewed successfully during data collection. A pilot study was conducted to examine the reliability of the measuring instrument employed in this study, and the determined value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.826, which is within an acceptable range of reliability.

The researchers sought advice from professionals with substantial expertise in the field of the subject under inquiry to ensure content veracity. To answer the study questions, categorical variables were used. The socio-demographic features of the respondents were evaluated using a table exhibiting the distribution of univariate frequencies. Furthermore, the frequency distribution table was used to compute the prevalence rate of elder abuse, including its various forms. This study prepared the following risk factors model based on binary logistic regression to examine influencing risk factors of elderly abuse.

$$Y= \ln [P_i/(1-P_i)] =\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n$$

$$Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_n X_n \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Here,

P_i= Probability of experiencing elderly abuse on age, family size, living with or without spouse, functional disability status, income, dependency, and health.

β_0= Constant (intercept)

β_n= Regression coefficient of independent variable X_n

X_n = Explanatory variable n

Y= Dependent variable (elderly abuse)

n= 1, 2, 3, 4.....

The VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) approach was used to examine multicollinearity. The variables for the model were chosen based on the results. Variables with a high multicollinearity index were excluded when developing the models. In Nepal, there are no ethical review committees for study proposals or instruments (Joshi et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the research proposal was approved by Nepal Open University's research committee, attesting to its legitimacy and ethical considerations.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

3.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ELDERS

This study examined at the socio-demographic features of 412 old people, 376 of whom were eligible for data analysis. Age, gender, family size, spousal living status, literacy status, health status,

functional ability status, dependent status, income level, and property ownership status were among the socio-demographic parameters examined.

These characteristics were thought to be important in forecasting the likelihood of elderly abuse. According to the findings of the study, 51.86% of the older participants were male, while 48.14% were female. The bulk of the elderly (34.57%) were in the 60-64 years age group, followed by the 65-69 years age group (24.20%), and the 70-74 years age group (19.68%). In terms of family size, the majority of the elderly (60.90%) lived in medium-sized families, while smaller proportions lived in small families (23.14%) and large sized (15.96%) families. According to spousal living status, 64.89% of elderly people lived with a spouse, while 35.11% did not. In terms of literacy, a significant percentage of the older population (54.79%) was found to be illiterate, with the remainder (45.21%) being literate.

Table 1: *Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Elderly People*

Demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	195	51.86%
	Female	181	48.14%
Age Group	60-64 years	130	34.57%
	65-69 years	91	24.20%
	70-74 years	74	19.68%
	75 years and above	81	21.54%
Family size	Small	87	23.14%
	Medium	229	60.90%
	Large	60	15.96%
Living with and	With spouse	244	64.89%
without spouse	Without spouse	132	35.11%
Literacy Status	Literate	170	45.21%
	Illiterate	206	54.79%
Dependency status	Independent	122	32.45%
	Dependent	254	67.55%
Income level	Low	208	55.32%
	Medium	94	25.00%
	High	74	19.68%
Ownership on property	Ownership	240	63.83%
	No ownership	136	36.17%
	Poor	172	45.74%
Health status	Fair	101	26.86%
	Good	103	27.39
Functional disability status	With disability	101	26.86%
	Without disability	275	73.14%

N=376

The investigation of dependency status revealed that 67.55% of elderly people were dependent, while 32.45% were independent. Income levels were classified as low, medium, and high, with the low-income group accounting for the majority of the elderly (55.32%), followed by the medium-income group (25.00%), and the high-income group (19.68%).

According to property ownership status, 63.83% of the elderly owned property, while 36.17% did not. In terms of health, the majority of the elderly (45.74%) reported poor health, while 26.86% stated fair health and 27.39% recorded good health. Functional disability status found that 73.14% of the elderly did not have a disability, whereas 26.86% were found with disability.

These socio-demographic factors provide light on the prevalence of elderly abuse and indicate vulnerable categories within the older population.

3.2 PREVALENCE OF ELDERLY ABUSE

The study sought to determine the prevalence and types of elder abuse in familial environments. Elder abuse is a worldwide issue, and it's vital to recognize that the incidence of abuse differs by type. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of older people who had experienced abuse in the previous 12 months.

Table 2: *Prevalence of Elderly Abuse in Family Environment*

Overall and types of abuse	Yes		No		Total
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Overall abuses	135	35.90%	241	64.10%	376
Types of abuse					
Neglect	76	20.21%	300	79.79	376
Psychological/Emotional	121	32.18%	255	67.82%	376
Economic	52	13.83%	324	86.17%	376
Sexual	11	2.93%	365	97.07%	376
Physical	25	6.65%	351	93.35%	376

N=376

The table contains information from 376 elderly individuals. According to the survey, 35.90% (N=135) of the older population suffered abuse, while the remaining 64.10% (N=241) did not. By looking at Table 3, we can see how common different sorts of abuse are. According to the findings, psychological abuse was the most prevalent type of abuse suffered by older people, accounting for 32.18 percent (N=121) of instances. Neglect was the most common, accounting for 20.21 percent (N=76), followed by economic abuse at 13.18 percent (N=52), physical abuse at 6.65 percent (N=25), and sexual abuse at 2.93 percent (N=11).

3.3 RISK FACTORS MODEL

In this study, five risk factor models were created to examine the effects of risk factors on elder abuse. Table 3 shows the risk factor model for elder abuse developed using binary logistic regression analysis. For this study, risk factor Model 1 was used, using family size, income, and functional disability status as variables. At a 95% confidence level, the p-value of the Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test for model 1 was 0.001 (0.05), suggesting that model 1 fits the data well. Similarly, the Nagelkerke R-square value of Model 1 was discovered to be 0.470, implying that Model 1 explains for 47% of the variability in elderly abuse. Furthermore, the data show that all of the coefficients in Model 1 are scientifically significant at the 5% level. For each unit increase in the predictor variable, these coefficients measure the change in the log probabilities of suffering abuse.

Table 3: *Factors used in the Risk Factors Model for Elderly Abuse*

Variables	Description
EBS	Elderly Abuse: 1-Abused, 0-Not abused
AGE	Age
FMS	Family Size
LIT	Literacy status: 1-literate, 0-illiterate
INC	Income
PWS	Property ownership: 1- Owners, 0-Not owners
FCD	Functional disability: 1-Without disability, 0-with disability
DEP	Dependency Status: 1-Independent 0-Dependent,
LWS	Living with and without spouse: 1-With Spouse, 0-Without Spouse
GEN	Gender: 1-Male, 0-Female

The most important component of elderly abuse in Model 1 was functional disability among elders, according to Table 4. According to the study, elders with functional disability were 12.13 times more vulnerable to abuse than those without disabilities. According to the coefficient for family size (FMS), the odds ratio of abuse increases by 0.779 for every unit increases in family size, implying that the risks of elder abuse are 22.1% greater in larger families than in smaller ones. As a result, the risk factor model 1 developed in this study identified functionally disabled elderly people as the key predictor of elderly abuse.

The risk factor Model 2 in this study was developed by integrating the variables of age, family size, income, and living circumstances with or without a spouse. The p-value of the Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test for model 2 with 95% confidence was 0.006, showing that model 2 adequately fits the data. Furthermore, the Nagelkerke R-square value of Model 2 was calculated to be 0.386, indicating that Model 2 accounts for 38.6% of the variability in elderly abuse. Similarly, the data show that all of the coefficients in Model 2 are statistically significant at the 5% level of significance. As the predictor variable increases by one unit, these coefficients measure the change in the log probabilities of suffering abuse. The most important factor of elderly abuse in Model 2 was living without a spouse among elders, according to Table 4.

Table 4: *Fitting of the Risk Factors Model for Elderly Abuse*

Variable	Dependent Variable Elderly abuse								
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	β	OR	Sig. value	β	OR	Sig. Value	β	OR	Sig. Value
Intercept	1.055	2.871	0.032	-1.718	0.179	0.192	-3.417	0.033	0.005
AGE	……	……	…….	0.049	1.050	0.007	0.055	1.057	0.001
FMS	-0.250	0.779	0.001	-0.337	0.714	0.000	-0.290	0.748	0.000
LWS	…….	……	…….	1.490	4.436	0.000	…….	…….	…….
LIT	…….	……	…….	…….	…….	…….	1.120	3.064	0.000
INC	0.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.000	…….	…….	…….
FDS	2.496	12.131	0.000	……	…….	……	…….	…….	…….
Nagelkerke R2	0.470			0.386			0.223		
Goodness-of-fit (sig.)	0.001			0.006			0.854		
N	376			376			376		

Contd. Table 4

Variable	Dependent Variable Elderly abuse					
	Model 4			Model 5		
	β	OR	Sig. Value	β	OR	Sig. value
Intercept	-4.076	0.017	0.001	-4.359	0.013	0.000
GEN	……	……	……	0.647	1.911	0.006
AGE	0.052	1.054	0.002	0.074	1.077	0.000
FMS	……	……	……	-0.296	0.744	0.000
INC	0.000	1.000	0.000	……	……	…….
PWS	1.345	3.839	0.000	……	……	…….
Nagelkerke R2	0.292			0.181		
Goodness-of-fit (sig.)	0.003			0.039		
N	376			376		

Significance at 95% CL

According to the study, older people who live separately are 4.44 times more likely to be abused than those who live with a spouse. According to the FMS, the odds ratio of abuse reduces by 0.714 for each unit increase in family size, implying that the likelihood of elder abuses is 28.6% greater in smaller households than in larger ones. Similarly, the coefficient for age (AGE) suggests that the odds ratio of abuse increases by 1.050 for each additional year of age, meaning a 5% increased chance of elderly abuse with each consecutive year. Elders living without a spouse was found as the biggest influencing factor for elderly abuse, according to the study's risk factor model 2.

Risk factor in this study, Model 3 was developed by considering the factors of age, family size, and literacy status. The p-value of the Hosmer and Lemeshow Test for model 3 with 95% confidence was 0.854, suggesting that model 3 does not adequately fit the data. Similarly, the Nagelkerke R-square value of model 3 was calculated to be 0.223, implying that Model 3 explains 22.3% of the variability in elderly abuse. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that at the 5% significance level, all of the coefficients in Model 3 were statistically significant. For each unit increase in the predictor variable, these coefficients measure the change in the log probabilities for experiencing abuse. The most important cause of elderly abuse in Model 3 was illiteracy among elders, according to Table 4. According to the study, illiterate elderly people were 3.06 times more likely to be abused than literate elders. According to the FMS, the odds ratio of abuse reduces by 0.748 for each unit increase in family size, implying that the likelihood of elder abuse is 25.2% greater in smaller families than in larger ones. Similarly, the coefficient for age (AGE) suggests that the odds ratio of abuse increases by 1.057 for each year older, indicating a 5.7% increased risk of elderly abuse with each additional year. According to the risk factor model 3, illiteracy is the most important risk factor for elderly abuse. Risk factor in this study, Model 4 was developed by integrating the variables of age, income, and property ownership. The p-value of the Hosmer and Lemeshow test for model 4 was 0.003 at the 5% significance level, showing that model 4 satisfactorily fits the data. Furthermore, according to the Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.292, Model 4 accounted for 29.2% of the variability in elderly abuse. Furthermore, the data demonstrate that all of the coefficients in Model 4 are statistically significant at the 5% level of significance. For each unit increase in the predictor variable, these coefficients measure the change in the log probabilities for experiencing abuse. According to Table 4, the absence of property ownership among elders was the most important cause of elderly abuse in Model 4.

According to the study, elders who did not own property were 3.84 times more

vulnerable to abuse than those who did. According to the coefficient for age (AGE), the odds ratio of abuse increases by 1.054 every year older, implying a 5.4% increased chance of elderly abuse with each additional year. Elders without property ownership are the most likely to be abused, according to the risk factor model 4 developed for the study. Finally, by adding the variables of age, family size, and gender, this study generated risk factor Model 5. The Hosmer and Lemeshow test p-value for model 5 was 0.039 at 95% confidence, showing that model 5 satisfactorily fits the data. Furthermore, with a Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.181, Model 5 explained 18.1% of the variability in elderly abuse.

Similarly, the data demonstrate that at the 5% significance level, all of the coefficients in Model 5 are statistically significant. For each unit increase in the predictor variable, these coefficients measure the change in the log probabilities for experiencing abuse. The most relevant component of elderly abuse in Model 5 was female gender among elders, according to Table 4. Female elders were found to be 1.91 times more likely to be abused than male elders, according to the study. According to the coefficient for age (AGE), the odds ratio of abuse increases by 1.077 every year older, indicating a 5.4% increased chance of elderly abuse with each additional year. Female older people are the leading predictors of elderly maltreatment, according to the study's risk factor model 5. Model 1 demonstrates larger variability in elderly abuse than the other four risk variables used in the study.

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

Elder abuse is a topic that has caught the concern of social professionals, as well as the academic community at large. Examining the incidence of elderly abuse and understanding the risk factors that influence it can aid in the development of effective strategies, policies, and programmes to avoid abusive behavior against elders living with family members.

The purpose of this study was to assess the prevalence of elderly abuse in the family environment and to investigate the risk variables that contribute to elderly abuse. According to the findings of this survey, over one-third of the elderly (35.90 percent) had suffered abuse in the preceding year. The prevalence of elderly abuse in this study (35.90%) is lower than previous studies in Butwal, Nepal (49.1%) by Yadav and Paudel (2016), developing countries (47.4%) by Chalise and Basnet (2017), and Jureli village, Nepal (46.6%) by Timalsina (2021), but higher than Bista and Joshi (2015) in Kathmandu, Nepal (26%).

A comparable research in Nepal's eastern area estimated an elderly abuse prevalence of 47.4% (Chalise & Basnet, 2017), which is higher than the current number of 35.9%. This disparity might be attributed to variances in the research's activities, as well as differences in the operational definition used for the study and the prevalence of cultural differences throughout the study's locations (Chalise & Paudel, 2020).

Psychological/emotional abuse was the most common kind of abuse, accounting for one-third of the study population (32.18%), followed by neglect (20.21%), economic abuse (13.83%), physical abuse (6.65%), and sexual abuse (2.93%). Except for physical and sexual abuse, the prevalence rate of this result is lower than in a previous research performed in the eastern portion of Nepal (Chalise & Basnet, 2017), yet quite high when compared to a study conducted in industrialised nations. In industrialized countries, the prevalence of psychological/emotional abuse is 11.6 percent (8.11-16.3), neglect is 2.6 percent (1.6-4.4), economic abuse is 6.8 percent (5.0-9.2), sexual abuse is 0.9 percent (0.6-1.4), and physical abuse is 2.6 percent (1.6-4.4) (Yon et al. 2017). According to the research's average periods of abuse, the elders had undergone general maltreatment, neglect, psychological abuse, and economic abuse at times, but they had rarely faced sexual abuse and physical abuse during the study period.

The primary socio-demographic risk variables of elderly abuse were measured using risk factors models based on Binary Logistic Regression analysis in this study. The models we generated show that socio-demographic characteristics impact the likelihood of elder abuse. The functional disability category was the most likely to be exploited. Living with or without a spouse, property ownership, literacy status, and gender are listed in descending order. The study's findings are more comparable to those of previous studies: WHO (2014) discovered that the elderly living alone is a risk factor for abuse, while Awal et al. (2020) discovered that the likelihood of elderly abuse increases with age. In each risk factor model for elderly abuse, the p values for all specified socio-demographic variables calculated by the study were less than 0.05.

The study's findings support the hypothesis that socio-demographic factors (gender, age, family size, literacy, living with or without spouse, income, and property ownership status) predict elderly abuse significantly at the 95% confidence level, as these variables had 0.05 p values in all models. Furthermore, respondents argued that the key responsible factors for being mistreated in a family environment include low income, dependency, a poor health condition, and having fewer children.

The study used the Social Exchange Theory to suggest that elderly abuse happens because older people become more reliant on their caregivers. According to Abolfathi Momtaz et al. (2013), as people age, they become more weak, vulnerable, and dependent on family members for assistance, which raises the likelihood of abuse. Age, dependency, income level, property ownership, functional disability, and health condition are factors employed in the study that indicate bad exchange connections with family members and increasingly dependent on them, and are shown to appropriately describe elderly abuse in this research as well. The hypothesis of the study, which was based on social exchange theory, was examined, and the data demonstrated a substantial association between elderly abuse and the socio-demographic characteristics studied (age, dependency, income level, property ownership, functional handicap, and health status). Similarly, the study's findings revealed that functional disability is the strongest predictive risk factor for elderly abuse, since elders with functional disability have poor exchange connections with family members.

5. CONCLUSION:

The survey study conducted in Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City, Nepal, reveals a significant link between elder abuse and socio-demographic characteristics of elders, in line with social exchange theory. The research contributes valuable insights to prevent elder abuse, and the odds ratio data based on socio-demographic characteristics can guide multi-sectoral social justice actions to protect high-risk elders. These findings highlight the importance of tailored treatments and support systems in light of the many risk factors linked with elderly abuse. Further study might investigate variable interactions and consider additional contextual elements to improve our grasp of this complex issue. Additionally, the study highlights the need for policy implementation and initiatives to counter the misconception of elders being a burden in society. The findings can inform literature reviews, government research agendas, and funding decisions while also sparking further investigation into different aspects of elder abuse. Qualitative research would be beneficial to complement and deepen our understanding of this issue.

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