Elderly Abuse: Causes and Determinants in Rural Naogan District of Bangladesh

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Introduction

Ageing in an inevitable life long process, marked by stages of life like infancy, child hood, adolescence and adulthood. Each stage is identified by relevant developmental tasks, appropriate skills, responsibilities and opportunities. Old age is the last of these stages. Ageing is one of the emerging problems in Bangladesh. This problem has been gradually increasing with its far-reaching consequences. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2001), percentage of aged population (60+) is only 6.13. This number will reach 14.6 million (about 9 percent of the total population) by the year 2025 (Concepcion, 1986; East-West Center, 2002), and this percentage of aged population in Bangladesh is to projected increase 17 percent by the year 2050. Although family ties in Bangladesh are strong and an overwhelming majority of the old lives with their family members, the position of an increasing number of older persons is becoming vulnerable. In the present scenario they cannot take it for granted that their children will look after them when they need care in their old age, keeping in view the longer life span which implies an extended period of dependency (Reddy, 2003). In the advanced countries, studies have shown that most elderly are neither safe nor happy at home as well as in institutional settings (Pillemer and Finkelhor, 1987; Koserj and Gracia, 1995)

Abuse is a synonym of misuse, mistreatment, ill-treat and maltreat. It as a noun refers to improper use, handling, giving physical maltreatment, using unjust or wrongful practices, insulting and using coarse language. As a verb it means to use wrongly, improperly, to hurt / injury by maltreatment, to force sexual activity on, to assail with contemptuous, coarse or insulting words. Not providing treatment to older person

according to expected functionality of particular stage of life is ill treatment / illegitimate behavior on part of care provider in the society, which becomes base of elderly abuse (Khan, 2004). According to Black (1990), the term 'abuse' refers to "make excessive or improper use of a thing or to employ it in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for its use to make an extravagant or excessive to abuse one's authority". In fact any act on the part of caretaker /provider to an elderly that deviates from the norm of society may be labeled as elder abuse. In the present circumstances in India the older persons are vulnerable to abuse, neglect and exploitation (Datta, 2006). But in Bangladesh, there is a lack of such type of research. Thus this paper is an attempt to study the existence and influencing factors of elder abuse in Bangladesh.

Objectives

To understand the inherent peculiarities about the abuse of the elderly this study is carried out with the following objectives:
- to observe the socio-economic status of the study respondents;
- to explore the nature and extend of elderly abuse;
- to find out the self-stated reasons of elder abuse; and
- to identify more influential factors that are responsible for the abuse of elderly population.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on the data collected from 7 villages of rural areas under Naogaon district, about 36 km away from Rajshahi divisional town of Bangladesh. One Thana named, Manda, was randomly selected from this district. From all the unions of the Thana, a Union (9 Number Tintulia Union Parishad) was randomly selected and from this union 7 villages were selected by using probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling. In order to performing the above task, first the authors made a pilot survey and collect voter list from Union Parishad and then identify seven villages out of 34 villages and collect the information of 743 elderly persons using Lahiri's method of PPS sampling. All the elderly (743 elderly) persons aged 60+ years were interviewed during September 6 to September 16, 2007. The data were edited, compiled, computerized and processed by using SPSS 10.5 program.

In any situation where a multivariate problem is encountered, the method of analysis should proceed from simple to complex in an orderly manner (Srinivasan, 1979). We have performed univariate classification analysis i.e. percentage distribution in order to observe the socio-economic conditions, nature of elder abuse and self-stated reasons of those abuse. Finally, a multivariate technique named as logistic regression analysis is used for determining factors that are more influential for the abuse of the elderly population.

Results and Discussions

Socio-Economic Conditions

We begin with a brief overview of the older persons with respect to several key socio-economic characteristics (See Table 1). 73 percent study respondents come from 60-64 years and 70+ years aged population. Highest percentage of the older male (41.2%) was in the age group 70 years and above whereas most of the older female (43.1%) was in the age group 60-64 years. There are strong cross-gender variations in education. The largest percent with no education is in female (91.0%) and the corresponding percentage for male is only 44.5%. The Table 1 also shows that most of the respondents are illiterate.

Marital status varies strongly by gender. For men about of 91 percent are married, whereas for women this figure is only upwards of 35 percent. But the percentage of female widowed is very high than the corresponding figure for male. For both men and women, the percent are not working quite similar. Most of the male elderly (44.5%) were engaged in agricultural work whereas 54.7% of the female elderly were work as housewives. In the less well off and / or predominantly agricultural societies, women's labour may be needed to contribute to the household economy or assist with the farming. In poor setting rural Bangladesh most of the elderly (53.6%) said that their family's monthly income is below Tk. 3000. The percent of the respondents whose family's monthly income in between Tk. 3000-5999 were 25.2% and 21.3% respondents family's monthly income was Tk. 6000 and above. It has been observed that most of the male elderly are economically independent whereas most of the female elderly are economically dependent.

Lastly, the largest percentage of the elderly resides with married children. Women (57.6%) are more likely than men (27.9%) to be living with married children whereas most of the male elderly (54.5%) were living with spouse (themselves).

Table 1: Selected socio- economic characteristics of the elderly population by sex

Socio-economic characteristics	Male N= 330		Female N= 413		Both N= 743	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age Composition						
60-64 years	95	28.8	178	43.1	273	36.7
65-69 years	99	30.0	101	24.5	200	26.9
70+ years	136	41.2	134	32.4	270	36.3
Level of Education (in actual year of schooling)						
No Education	147	44.5	367	91.0	523	70.4
1-5 years	121	36.7	35	8.5	156	21.0
6+ years	62	18.8	2	0.5	64	8.6
Marital Status						
Married	302	91.5	146	35.4	448	60.3
Widowed	24	7.3	264	63.9	288	38.8
Others	4	1.2	3	0.7	7	0.9
Work Status						
Not Working	113	34.2	141	34.1	254	34.2
Agriculture	147	44.5	9	2.2	156	21.0
Service	15	4.5	-	-	15	2.0
Business	30	9.1	8	1.9	38	5.1
Housewife	-	-	226	54.7	226	30.4
Others	25	7.6	29	7.0	54	7.3
Family's Monthly Income (in Tk.)*						
Up to 2999	163	49.4	235	56.9	398	53.6
3000-5999	84	25.5	103	24.9	187	25.2
6000+	83	25.2	75	18.2	158	21.3
Economic Status						
Independent	230	69.7	101	24.5	331	44.5
Dependent	100	30.3	312	75.5	412	55.5
Living Arrangement						
Living alone	6	1.8	51	12.3	57	7.7
With spouse	180	54.5	77	18.6	257	34.6
With unmarried children	49	14.8	37	9.0	86	11.6
With married children	92	27.9	238	57.6	330	44.4
Others	3	0.9	10	2.4	13	1.7

Notes: * Bangladesh Currency – Taka i.e. Tk.

Nature of Abuse

Although scholars are of difference of opinion about the definition of the term "elder abuse" (see, for instance, Pillemar and Finkelhor, 1987; Srinivas, 1996), for the sake of present exercise we have defined elder abuse as a harm perpetrated to an older person by someone in a position of trust who may have control over the victim. This includes physical abuse, mental/psychological abuse, economic abuse and so on. In our study we have got three types of abuse- physical, mental and economical abuse. Physical abuse occurs in the form of slapping, hitting, pushing, and restraint by tying, bruises, fractures burns, sprains cuts. Psychological/ mental abuses include repeated and constant use of threats, humiliation, scolding and any other form of mental cruelty leading to physical, bad mental distress (treating the elderly like a child, blaming, intimidating, threatening, violence and isolation leading to fear, depression, sleeplessness and anorexia). Economic abuse occurs in the form of failure to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and personal care leading to malnutrition, over-sedation, depression, confusion, and life threatening health problems. These types of neglects refer to as economic abuse. People are living longer with current medical advances and their healthier lifestyles. The percentage distribution of the elderly abuse and the nature of such abuse according to sex are presented in Table 2.

From Table 2 we observed that there are 202 elderly persons out of 743 elderly persons are abused which contains 27.2% for the both sex. It is clear from the table that, the percentage of female abused elderly is almost double than that of male. Most notably, the Plan of Action emanating from the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing held in April 2002 argues repeatedly through out the documents that older women are more vulnerable than their male counterparts in virtually every dimension including being economically disadvantaged (United Nations, 2002).

From Table 2 we also observed that the elderly population are not only affected by one types of abuse but also by two or more types. The percentage of mentally abused elderly is very high which is 76.7% for both sex and it is for male 78.7% and 75.9% for female. The percentage of mentally and economically abused elderly population is also

noticeable. The percentage of other types of abuse likes physical, economical, physical and mental, and physical, mental and economical remain quite low.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the abuse of the elderly and their nature according to sex

Characteristics	Male		Female		Both	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Were they abuse?						
Yes	61	18.5	141	34.1	202	27.2
No	269	81.5	272	65.9	541	72.8
Nature of Abuse						
Physical (i)	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	1.0
Mental (ii)	48	78.7	107	75.9	155	76.7
Economical (iii)	3	4.9	3	2.1	6	3.0
(i) and (ii)	2	3.3	8	5.7	10	5.0
(ii) and (iii)	5	8.2	16	11.3	21	10.4
(i),(ii)and(iii)	1	1.6	7	5.0	8	4.0

Reasons for Elderly Abuse

Aged population forms a large and vulnerable group suffering from high level of physical, economical and social insecurity. There are great socio-economic variations within the aged population which make the care for the aged more complex and challenging. The individual uniqueness among older people along many dimensions is as pronounced as diversity among individuals at younger ages (Binstock, 1994). It has been well documented; the problem with inadequate or inaccurate information about ageing is its tendency to promote stereotypical thinking, which results in negative attitude towards ageing (Palmore, 1998; Stewart, 2004). In most countries of the world the older persons do not enjoy a descent status in society. This is all the more so in developing countries such as India which are economically poor and have been subjected to the ravages of demographic transition, migration, modernization, dwindling joint family, market economy, poor public health and hygiene and low social and

economic security (Ramamurthy, 2003). The percentage distribution of self-stated reasons for their abuse according to sex is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that not a single factor appears to be responsible for effecting humiliation, abuse, and neglect of the elderly. However, decreases in earning capacity, economic dependence, and health hazards have a distinct role in the causation of older abuse. Obviously, a consideration of factors personal, familial, economical combines together results in elder abuse.

From Table 3 it is observed that poverty is the most dominant single factor responsible for the elderly abuse, which contains 21.3% for both sex and 24.6% and 19.9% for male and female respectively. It is also observed that the combined effect of poverty, inability and dependency are highly responsible for the elderly abuse, which contains 39.1% for both sex, 36.1% for male and 40.4% for female. Other factors like inability, dependency, property distribution and their combinations make the elderly abuse which contains a relatively low but noticeable percentage in this regard.

Table 3:   Percentage distribution of several reasons for elderly abuse according to sex

Reasons for Abuse	Male		Female		Both	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Poverty (i)	15	24.6	28	19.9	43	21.3
Inability (ii)	5	8.2	9	6.4	14	6.9
Dependency(iii)	4	6.6	18	12.8	22	10.9
Property distribution (iv)	1	1.6	5	3.5	6	3.0
Illness (v)	0	0.0	3	2.1	3	1.5
(i)and (ii)	6	9.8	14	9.9	20	9.9
(i),(ii)and(iii)	22	36.1	57	40.4	79	39.1
(ii),(iii)and(v)	4	6.6	5	3.5	9	4.4
(iii),(iv)and(v)	4	6.6	2	1.4	6	3.0

Logistic Regression Analysis for the Abuse of the Elderly Population

Results based on the multivariate logistic regression analysis for the abuse of the elderly population shown in Table 4 considering abuse i.e. were they abuse as the dependent variable which is dichotomized by assessing 1 if the respondent was abused and 0 for not. From Table 4 it is observed that elderly population in the age group 65-69 years was 2.05 times more likely to face abuse significantly as compared with reference category. Elderly who are female were not significantly but 1.01 times more like to face abuse than male. Abuse is also strongly related to level of education. From Table 4 it is clear that, those who have no education were 2.59 times more likely to face abuse significantly than the reference category.

Respondent's marital status also exerts significant effect on the abuse of the elderly population. Elderly widows were 2.36 times more significantly vulnerable for being abused than the reference category. Considering elderly living alone as reference category, we have not got any significant category for being abused.

Those elderly were not working were 1.22 times more likely to face abuse than those were working but it is not significant. Also we have not got any significant value for ability of doing regular activities. Regarding on the family's monthly income the Table also shows that whose family's income in between Tk.3000-5999 were 1.66 times significantly like to face abuse than the reference income group. Here monetary dependence of elderly on his/her family shows insignificant result.

Table 4 also demonstrates significant difference of abuse across the various group of present physical condition. The difference between healthy and unhealthy and healthy and fairly healthy is highly significant. Those were unhealthy were more like to face abuse which contains 3.21 times and fairly healthy elderly also 2.53 times more likely face abuse than those are healthy.

Table 4: Result of logistic analysis on abuses of the elderly population

Variables		Elderly Persons		
		Coeff. β	S.E. of Coeff.	Odds Ratio
Respondent's Age	60-64(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	65-69	0.72**	0.234	2.05
	70+	0.25	0.245	1.29
Respondent's Sex	Male(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	Female	.01	0.274	1.01
Respondents Education	No education	0.95**	0.457	2.59
	1-5 years	-0.06	0.486	0.94
	6 years+(ref.)	-	-	1.00
Marital Status	Married(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	Widow	0.86**	0.282	2.36
	Others	1.19	0.822	3.29
Living Arrangement	Alone(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	With Spouse	-0.13	0.409	0.88
	With Children	-0.46	0.342	0.63
Work Status	Working(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	Not working	0.20	0.245	1.22
Ability of doing regular work	Able(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	Unable	-0.34	0.289	0.71
Family's monthly income	Up to 2999(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	3000-5999	0.51*	0.267	1.66
	6000+	0.43	0.291	1.54
Economic Condition	Independent	-0.17	0.223	0.85
	Dependent(ref.)	-	-	1.00
Present physical condition	Healthy(ref.)	-	-	1.00
	Fairly healthy	0.93**	0.313	2.53
	Unhealthy	1.17***	0.312	3.21
Constant		-3.15***	0.752	0.04

Notes: ref. = Reference Category,

Level of Significance: ***p<0.01;**p<0.05;*p<0.10

Conclusions and Recommendations

Elderly is a serious reality and it is the last step of life cycle. None can avoid this stage. At present global population situation in respect of age structure the elderly 60+ is a growing segment (Rahman, Tareque and Rahman, 2007). That neglect and abuse of the elderly is a menacing problem and increasing being felt by many people can hardly be defined of.

The present study revealed that most vulnerable section of the elderly belong to the oldest of the old because of their disability and debilitating conditions, yet the elderly of younger age-groups who are active but have no means to survive cannot also be overlooked. More number of better off families accommodated their dependent parents whereas the aged parents of the poor classes were left to their own due to economic hardship faced by their poor children (Thane, 2000). Among the elderly women group is the most likely victims of abuse. The study also brought to light that illiteracy, unhealthy physical condition, utmost economic dependence of the already poverty-stricken family makes the elderly susceptible to elder neglect and abuse.

The overall findings seems to suggest close relationship of abuse of the elderly with their socio-economic and educational background and this piece of information needs to be scientifically utilized in developing suitable programs addressing the elderly of the developing countries as well as Bangladesh.

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