

Kapur Shankardass, M. (Ed.). (2020). *International Handbook of Elder Abuse and Mistreatment*. Springer Singapore, 920 pp. ISBN-13: 978-9811386091

Reviewed by Lawrence Adebusoye¹

This new book, edited by Dr Shankardass, captured elder abuse and mistreatment from the six geographical regions of the world: America; the Caribbean; Europe; the Middle East, west and South Asia; East Asia and Oceania; and Africa. The authors elucidated the prevalence and forms of abuse, problems identification, and various regional solutions proffered.

The book is structured into six parts representing the six geographical regions of the world. The Editor Dr Mala Kapur Shankardass presents an academic and professional insight into the subject of elder abuse. This knowledge-based approach comes as a reflection of her active role as Chair to various bodies on elder abuse and in correspondence to published works.

Elder abuse was described as a social, legal, and public health problem which is increasing in tandem with the rise in the population of older persons and varies widely between countries. The main prototypes are physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, financial abuse or exploitation, neglect, sexual abuse, and self-neglect. These permeate all sectors of human lives. The changing world's current realities challenge the tradition of revering, respecting, and caring for older people. Predisposing and perpetuating factors, primarily socioeconomic characteristics, to elder abuse are related to the victims, perpetrators of the abuse, and systems. Many countries have attempted to combat and deal with elder abuse with limited success.

The 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing political declaration and the subsequent 2009 Third Committee of the UN General Assembly play a significant role in shaping the knowledge and advocacy towards elder abuse. The statement clearly illustrates the functions of the family, institution, and community. The need for more pilot studies based on the life course perspective, which could show how people felt the abuse, in terms of the types and frequency of the abuse, with a need for a mind-shift from problem identification to the provision of solutions to end mistreatment was made.

Part I- America

In the USA, Teaster et al., explored the past when elder abuse was treated as a family matter and the present where there had been attempts at solutions in the domains of medicine, law, social services, and private organizations and entities. The way forward focused on integrated

¹ Chief Tony Anenih Geriatric Centre, University College Hospital, Nigeria. (larrymacsoye27@gmail.com)

participation of advocates, researchers, theorists, practitioners, and older persons themselves. The Elder Justice Act 2010 was the first federal law in the USA "to specifically state that it is the right of older adults to be free of abuse, neglect, and exploitation". The White House Conference on Aging in 2015 made elder justice a priority. Information and services designed to prevent elder abuse and assist the victims are provided by providers such as federal agencies, nonprofit and professional organizations, although limited by funding. In Mexico, the data on abuse is varied and heterogeneous in light of the dearth of studies. Older Mexicans mostly suffer single-type abuse, mainly psychological abuse. The perceptions and experiences of the victims and the perpetrators of the abuse are primarily based on family dysfunctionality, unsavory past experiences, and physical, economic, and emotional dependence. Culturally relevant 'Geriatric Mistreatment Scale (GMS)' was advocated as a tool to assess abuse in older Mexicans. Chile is the longest-lived country in Latin America. The situation of elder abuse is similar to that of Mexico, including low image and negative connotation of older persons. Continued advocacy, training, sensitization of households, and harmonising perspectives were proffered as the way out of the predicament. Podnieks discussed the various programs in Canada and took us through the initiatives to prevent elder abuse. Canada played an important role in nurturing the global organization 'International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA)' founded by late Rosalie Wolf and The World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEEAD) and other support groups. Canada dealt with abuse through the Government-funded Integrated Police Response for Abused Seniors (IPRAS) model, which has five integrated components: police intervention areas, coordination, guidance and coaching, cross-cutting support, and strategic management and leadership.

Part II- The Caribbean

The situation of elder abuse and mistreatment was almost similar in the three Caribbean states showcased. Gina reported increased documentation of cases of elder abuse in Peru between 2015 and 2017. The Peruvian victims were mostly older women experiencing mostly the psychological form of abuse. In Jamaica, one of the largest islands in the Caribbean, elder abuse mainly occurs within the family and is often hidden as a family subject. Few data exist, and identified risk factors were poverty and health status of the victims. Jamaica is a signatory to most regional and international agreements on elder abuse. The third Caribbean country highlighted was Puerto Rico which has a large population of older persons alongside a demographic typology of low birth rates and moderate and low mortality rates. This transition had impacted the families negatively in terms of poverty and care of older persons. Neglect, followed by emotional or psychological abuse, was the commonest, and the victims were mostly female, widowed, and poor.

Part III: Europe

Insights and experience of elder abuse in Europe were represented by the reports from Finland, Romania, Hungary, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom. An increase in elder abuse mirrors the rise in the population of older people as in other parts of the world. Elder abuse discourse has been in Europe since the 20th century. In Europe, the

prevalence rates of elder abuse vary between 0.8 and 29.3%. Finland enacted the Social Welfare Act 1301/2014, which mandated the social service providers to respond to the needs caused by family violence and abuse. Older people (78%) believed they would know their rights if they encountered discrimination or harassment. In Romania, the concept of elder abuse is a widely unknown and unspoken phenomenon, with its policy on elder abuse is still in its infancy. Not surprisingly, there is a dearth of studies regarding prevalence, risk factors, case studies, or efficient interventions in elder abuse, and interventions are initiated by non-governmental sectors. The issues related to older persons are not a priority for the government of Hungary. There is a lack of an institutional framework to research, advocacy and policy formulation on elder abuse. Domestic violence is presently a neglected issue with little available intervention embedded in domestic violence advocacy. However in Portugal, there is an increase in awareness and publications on elder abuse. Research is based mostly on the prevalence of abuse where Portugal is listed as having one of the highest rates in Europe (39.4%). Notwithstanding, elder abuse is legally considered domestic violence. Goergen focused on the prevention of elder abuse in Germany. The discussion on elder abuse followed the introduction of the mandatory long-term care insurance scheme in the 1990s. Model projects and initiatives have been developed but have not been linked to form a coherent strategy. The prevention of the use of restraint in residential facilities was one positive result of the advocacy. Psychological, physical and financial were the three main types of abuse in the Flanders. There is a shortage of accurate and reliable prevalence data due to non-reporting because elder abuse is considered 'being too trivial'. Preventive efforts are focused on promoting the well-being and dignity of older people and early detection of elder abuse.

Penhale wrote on the lack of reliable data in the United Kingdom on the prevalence, identification, and abuse causes. Instead of a single law on elder abuse, there are several different pieces of legislation and different specific sections of which may be used by individuals who require protection. Scotland has a particular legislation relating to adult protection which was developed and enacted in 2007, while Wales has a comparable legislation to the Care Act in England that was passed in 2014 in the form of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. In Northern Ireland, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Regional Adult Protection and Policy procedural guidance, was introduced in 2006. Good practice in safeguarding vulnerable adults with clear lines of support for older individuals and procedural guides for professionals was recommended in the UK.

Part IV: Middle East, West, and South Asia

This section addresses the role of the family dynamics and the strength of family ties between the victims and perpetrators of elder abuse in all the countries reviewed. Israel is a multisystem (Jews, Muslims, Christians) modern country rooted in religious, traditional, familial, and cultural values. Here, the family members provide 80–90% of care for disabled older persons, which can be a stressor and source of conflict in family relations. Abuse of older persons is still hidden within the family. A similar prevalence of abuse exists in the Jewish and non-Jewish older population and low prevalence of physical and sexual forms of abuse. Despite being the first country to enact the Nursing Law providing home Care in 1988, the family is still the primary carer of older persons in Israel. The authors noted the need for

accessible services to older persons and their family members, professionals who work with older persons, and direct treatment to victims and their aggressors. Elder abuse is seen as a consequence of modernization due to the rapidly increasing older population in the demographic structure of Turkey. Older persons are seen as a dependent group and a burden to society because of their social problems, diseases, and disabilities.

The increased intensity and magnitude of elder abuse may be due to the perception that it is a private matter in India. Verbal abuse and disrespect are common. The authors advocated for the creation of an 'abuse-free environment' through an interdisciplinary and multi-pronged approach. Also, documentation of interventional programs and practices, primarily through multisectoral advocacy, is required. Nepal is a traditional society where parents are seen as gods 'matri devo bhawa, pitri devo bhawa'. Factors associated with an increased incidence of all the prototypes of abuse include urbanization, youth migration, work-life conflict, change in lifestyle, and varying moral values. The Nepalese government formulated the Senior Citizens Act, 2063. S.4 (2006) and the national old-age pension scheme (1995) that paid NRs. 100 (about US\$17) a year to all people aged 70 and over. The government of Bangladesh adopted a National Policy on Population Ageing in 2013, based on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (Bangladesh Parents' Care Act 2013). Like India, most informal caregivers in Sri Lanka are family members, relatives, or friends.

Part V: East Asia and Oceania

This Part deals primarily with efforts at mitigating the effects of elder abuse through legislation. In South Korea, private agencies started the efforts on elder abuse before the government secured the legal ground through the Welfare of Older Persons Act in 2004 and amended with the increasing rate and seriousness of elder abuse. The author wrote that the perception of elder abuse has shifted from being a social problem to a human right, and it is now considered a crime depending on the seriousness of the abuse. The Act on the Prevention of Elder Abuse, Support for Caregivers of Elderly Persons and Other Related Matters' became effective in April 2006 in Japan. The positive outcomes of this Act is that it has increased awareness, reduced the denomination of abuse as family issues, and strengthened the roles of 'Community Comprehensive Support Centers' of each municipality. Elder abuse is increasing in Japanese institutions and decreasing in domestic settings. Simultaneously, physical abuse, which is the commonest form of abuse reported, has been declining in institutions and increasing in the domestic setting. In Singapore, there is a multidisciplinary care management approach to preventing and managing elder abuse, this is carried out with the establishment of the National Family Violence Networking System, the Family Violence Dialogue Group, and Family Violence Specialist Centres.

Yan describes the elder abuse among Chinese, Taiwanese, and Chinese Immigrants in Canada and the USA, which shared similarities with other countries. However, there is a vital cultural context based on the teachings of Confucius, which advocates filial piety, that emphasizes the merits of benevolence and propriety, prescribing that adult children provide their parents with care, respect, and financial support most importantly, and always obey their parents. Various policies and legislation are in place within Chinese communities, but resources and

lack of personnel hamper the implementation. There is no national elder abuse prevalence data in Australia. Still, available local studies show a wide variation in the prevalence of elder abuse, and the field of elder abuse in Australia which is currently undergoing a period of rapid change, where elder abuse has emerged as a national priority. Jurisdiction is affected by problematic issues in conceptualizing elder abuse, which is seen as a State rather than a Federal issue. Australia is a culturally diverse society. Older people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are vulnerable to abuse due to poor English skills, social isolation, limited support networks, differing generational expectations of care and support, and different cultural interpretations of abusive behaviour. There are no specific elder abuse laws (at a state or national level) or a national government policy framework related to elder abuse.

Part VI: Africa [Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia]

Here the book focused mainly on the prevalence of elder abuse and the changes in the family structure through global modernization. Atetwe discussed the prevalence of elder abuse in the sub-county in Kenya. Though no official rates are available, a descriptive study found 82.1% of the older people in Emuhaya are abused both in domestic and public settings, and neglect (43.9%) the most prevalent form of abuse. As in other world regions, abusers are mostly family members, with daughters-in-law appearing to be the main perpetrators due to the weakened family values. Cadmus wrote on the situation on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment in the Nigerian Communities. She mentioned that the prevalence and types of abuse vary with the cultural diversity in the geo-political zones of Nigeria. Although abuse of older persons is regarded as taboo in many African countries, the reality is that it is present and increasing. The situation in Liberia follows the general African trend. Gavi gave an overall insight into elder abuse in Africa. The changes and disintegration of the family structure due to modernization, urbanization, globalization, and increased presence of women in the workforce. The changes have led to a significant reduction in the availability of primary caregivers and a void in the care of older Africans. Elder abuse remains invisible and buried as a family issue in Africa and older women are more vulnerable. However, both the NGOs and governments are paying attention to elder abuse, dialogues are taking place, and laws are being enacted that support older people, but implementation is the big problem.

In conclusion, the key outcomes in this book which affect older persons globally could be summarized as; 1. There is a difficulty in determining the magnitude of elder abuse due to poor identification, lack of reportage, and differences in the definition of elder abuse despite the increasing older population. 2. Psychological and emotional abuses are the most common form of abuse, 3. Socioeconomic and family characteristics of the victims and abusers play an important role especially in older women who are mostly victims of the abuse, 4. There is a difficulty in implementing laws and legislations where available which are often fragmented and sometimes overlapping in content, and 5. There are ongoing efforts at preventing elder abuse and mistreatment even though they are inadequate.