



Family Victimization and Plight of Elderly Women: A Representative Study in Odisha State of India

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Abstract

Victimization of elderly women in the family is an issue that challenges the socio-cultural notion of 'safe home' and the 'protective-shield' of Indian family. Present paper examines the prevalence, nature, causes and the perspectives of family violence against elderly women in southern districts of Odisha state of India. A study was carried out on 403 elderly women above 60 years and first hand information based on interviews and focused group discussion was collected to examine the family victimization and related issues involved in it. Women, who in their early family life enjoyed power, autonomy and control, become the victims of the same power by their own family members in later years of life. This paper suggests means to reduce violence against elderly women through balancing traditional family beliefs with consciousness about gender equality and non-violence.

Keywords: Gender, family violence, family victimisation, elderly women, intergenerational conflict, verbal and psychological abuse, safe aging and Odisha state.

Introduction

Family victimisation is relatively a new concept in the family studies in India. Although, it exists since time immemorial, almost in every society - rich or poor, educated or uneducated, east or west in some form or the other to a greater or lesser degree. Family violence leads to family victimization. Recognition of the problem from victim's perspective is only a recent phenomenon in India. The family and bonds between members in the family have always been glorified in mythologies in Indian family life and culture. However, violence against women and in some cases even against young girls and aged women in the family is one such issue which challenges the socio-cultural notions of family as 'safe haven' in India¹. Violence against women has always been a growing problem in all societies but escalating violence and victimization of elderly women as a new social enigma is emerging as a global concern in all societies.

India's demographic presence depicts an escalating growth in elderly population. Reasons ascribed mostly are of waning fertility, rising expectations of life at birth and elongation of old age death. India with 77 million is the second largest home for the elderly in the earth next to China with 127 million. By 2031 India's aged population will be 179 million and by 2051, it will increase to 301 million. Researchers have shown that with the number of years of survival gone up, the quality of life of the grey population is getting marginalised. The low status of the elderly in India are attributed to many factors like changing family and social structure; values, growing individualism,

rising aspiration for consumerism etc. Growing education, urbanism, industrialisation, westernisation, promoted by migrations of younger members of the family to towns and metro cities under the influence of new liberal, capitalist economic structures of globalised world are perceived as contributing factors too. Acute shortage of accommodation, rising rent in urban areas prohibit older persons to live with their children. Participation of women in job market, force the elderly people to live alone. Joint family, the natural place of support and solace has gradually being crumbled putting the elderly to risk, neglect, harassment and insecurity.

Prevalence of family violence in India from is quite evident large scale reporting^{1,2}. Family violence has been acknowledged worldwide as a violation of the basic human rights of women. An increasing amount of research highlights the health aspects, intergeneration effects and demographic consequences of such violence^{3,4,5}. According to the United Nations (2002) report⁶, violence against women is widely prevalent in both developed and developing societies. "Women in all cultures, religions, classes, and ethnic groups suffer from violence perpetrated against them; and India, a diverse nation, is no different"^{7,8}. Domestic violence is the epitome of unequal power relationship between women and men. Violence against elderly women is described of late as 'the newest' and the 'most hidden' forms of violence within the family. The problem has become more visible and indeed need urgent attention with the fast graying Indian society. Older people in general and older women in particular are extremely vulnerable and marginalized group, who hardly could draw the attention of state protection.

In the organisation of social structure, family is the vital source conducive that provides conducive atmosphere for socialization, satisfaction of personal goal and fulfillment of avoid objectives of life. Though the impact of social change on Indian family has been somewhat slow and complex; but for the past few decades the pace has been rapid and far-reaching, culminating in the metamorphosis of its structure and functioning. The social forces influencing the family are varied, such as the liberalized and globalised employment structures, educational and health services. The traditional structure and function of Indian family with its heavy dependence on exclusive utilisation of labour of the women members has been served a major blow by the new policies of demographic intervention and related policies of educating and empowering women⁹.

Family is a place of solace where people seek love, affection, security, shelter and fulfillment. Family is the central force of society and acts as a connecting link between individual and community. In a country like India where familial relationships are held in high esteem; crime and abuse against the elderly is rarely talked about. Increasing scourge of violence has made more and more elderly muster courage to come out open in protest and highlight the intensity, dynamism and gravity of elder abuse that lie hidden in cloistered silence. The cross-cultural matrix of gender-based violence; find manifestation in family violence towards the elderly women than elderly men. Lives of elderly women are seen as tales of hardships and sorrows. Factors creating these are the feminine nature of ageing, society's discriminatory treatment towards female education, employment and ill treatment because of the traditional roles attached to women. Such traditions and discrimination have made lives of women even more vulnerable in old age. Elderly women are ill-treated and abused in the families and exposed to violence of differing nature and magnitude¹.

The gendered nature of violence against women is documented significantly in a good number of works. Moreover, growing consciousness on women's right has made the problem of elderly women's abuse come out in public, been discussed and debated. Indian older women face triple jeopardy - that of being old, of being women, and of being poor¹⁰. Violence and abuse against elderly females at home are more or less considered as normal conduct and behaviour. Therefore, it is mostly under reported and less attended issues. Further, victim's sense of shame, fear of reprisal and her ignorance about her legal and human rights made the matter remain closeted and out of public gaze. In developing country like India, where cultural systems and the extended family meant to protect and care for older people, are older people's greatest enemies. Elderly people in general experience a state of transition from independence to complete dependence mostly on their children, which produces a crises situation for all generations. However, the degree of this changed status differs from region and economic situation in the family. Moreover, sex of the older person becomes an important risk factor for abuse¹¹.

Family violence against elderly women is manifested in harassment, intimidation, and control of the woman's identity, conduct and behaviour. Elderly hood does not spare them from deeply entrenched patriarchy and subordination and force them to lead a life of misery and pain in every aspect - physical, psychological, emotional, social and economic life. As a result of their age and various disabilities and due to low socio-economic status, illiteracy, ignorance, elderly women in their homes are particularly vulnerable to violence. Violence against women during their old age is because of the relative powerlessness linked to their frailty, dependence and physical disability, as well as issues of gender, race, belief, ethnic origin and class¹². They struggle to survive without legal protection and are not empowered to take resort to the existing institutional and legal resources available to their advantage for redressal.

Violence takes place in situations where elderly may apparently seem free to live, but is held prisoner by fear of violence, social isolation and family prestige. Violence in the domestic sphere is perpetrated by both males and females who are, or who have been, in positions of trust, intimacy and power: husbands, sons, brothers, daughters, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law and others. The power dynamics between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in India to a great extent result in acrimony and usually escalate into abuse and violence in both physical and psychological form. The magnitude of the problem is however, shrouded by the fact that domestic violence is a crime that is usually 'under-played' as a conflicting situation at home and goes unreported. This is mainly because of shame, fear of reprisal, lack of trust, lack of awareness and lack of knowledge about legal rights, lack of confidence in, or fear of, the legal system and costs involved make the elderly women reluctant to report incidents of abuse within the domestic setting.

There is very little study available on family violence against women in general and elderly women in particular. There is a need to understand the magnitude and nature of different forms of violence against women during later years of life. It is mainly because women not only are the victims of family violence during early years of marriage but also continue to suffer during later years as well. The state of Odisha languishes behind development parameters. Despite the progress made in the last several years 39% of the people still live below poverty line. Odisha's women constitute nearly half its population. Women, particularly elderly women in rural and semi-urban areas face disproportionately high risk to their life, livelihoods and health on account of gender based violence. Elderly women in Odisha too are victims of family violence. They are victimized in the name of social norms, cultural traditions, and social prejudices. Around 75 percent of the families in the state are rural and 50 percent of the female population of the state continues to be illiterate with highest maternal mortality rate. Increased poverty and economic stress in rural Odisha is likely to erode the traditional family care and support for the elderly in general and for the elderly women in particular. The existing patriarchal family system in Odisha permits limited access for elderly

women to property rights, which further compounds their difficulty in obtaining enough income for survival¹³. In Odisha, the societal norm is that the adult children, especially the sons are expected to take care of the elderly parents. Family violence in Odishan families is very common. It is the result of social and economic strains on households with limited or very few resources, in which older members are perceived as a burden on their own family members. Adult children, spouse, family members or relatives abuse the elderly people in many forms. In Odisha, elderly victims often do not report officially due to shame and social non-acceptability.

Further, incase of even educated and employed women problems are enormous in terms of the general attitudes, relationships and behavior of others (especially from male) towards them. Although women in Odisha are becoming educated and engaging in employment, the traditional status of women within the family is still expected from them. Any violation in traditional performance and behavior on their part (educated and employed) is seriously viewed and stern opposition is created, leading to various forms of abuse, neglect and violence¹⁴. Women continue to have little and undemocratic access to their life and especially within family¹⁵. The phenomenon of violence against elderly women in general within family is a complex and deeply embedded psycho-social issue. However, not much work in this field has been undertaken and needs a focused attention of researchers and policy planners. In the context of demographic scene and social values, the situation of the elderly in Indian society is becoming more critical and of late abuse and neglect of the elderly in the family context is emerging as a significant problem. There are many micro and major studies to prove its existance and in fact its increase. Against this backdrop the broad objective of the present study is set to determine the prevalence, examine the patterns and perspective of family violence against elderly women in South districts of Odisha state of Indian subcontinent.

Procedure adopted for the sample study

Based on both qualitative and quantitative data, the study attempted to collect empirically reliable and statistically valid estimates of prevalence, patterns and perspectives of family violence against elderly women.

Area of the study: The study broadly covered six major districts of south Odisha state, namely Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Koraput and Malkangiri. These districts are basically rural and tribal with low literacy and belong to low socio-economic groups. From each district, one block was selected as representative for survey and study.

Samples for the study: Sample selection for this investigation was conducted in phases.

First Phase: From each block of the above-mentioned districts, women above 60 years of age were surveyed through focus

group discussions and using observation schedule to identify the victims of domestic violence. Total number of women surveyed is 1921.

Second Phase: From the total 1921 surveyed samples, 403 elderly were identified victims and for further in depth study. This constitutes around 21 percent of elderly women who were victims of family violence in southern districts of Odisha.

Tools and techniques used: The study used multi-method approaches like focus group discussions, observation, interviews, and case study for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Focus group discussion is used to elicit reliable information from the elderly women with utmost care and by specialized project staff. It was conducted in a participatory manner by a trained facilitator, so that the participants interact and discuss topics among themselves. The method ensures true and reliable data information. There are few other tools and measures used in this study for more detail investigations on the violence against elderly women. These include, follow-up individual in-depth interviews with the identified elderly victims from the focused groups to clarify points of doubt and to obtain further detail information regarding, their family's demographic and personality profile; physical, mental, social and economic status; nature and type of violence faced; probable causes of violence; perpetrator / s and finally their expectation from life. Observations on samples is adopted for cross-validation, especially in sensitive issues like violence within the family set up against the elderly women, who always tend to hide the shameful facts.

Findings of the study

Women in south Odisha districts (Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamala, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada) enjoy a special status compared to coastal districts of Odisha. The family is more of nuclear type (under the shroud of patriarchy); family functioning style is matriarchal in nature with women welding more power, autonomy and control of the households. There are regional and community variations in elderly women's status. However, there is much less variation observed in the rate of occurrences of family violence in Odisha. The result of the present investigation is summarized as follows:

In order to find out the prevalence of family violence against elderly women, the target samples participated in focused group discussions to reveal the fact that during last two years, whether they were facing any type of abuse and violence within the family. The respondents were very direct and clear in their opinion regarding the type of sufferings they were facing and quite vocal to bring out the long undisclosed issues of sufferings caused by their family members at the later years of their life. Table – 1 indicates the prevalence of domestic violence against elderly women in six districts of south Odisha in percentages. Around 21 percent of women reported experiencing different forms of violence in their day-to-day lives over years in their

state of elderly hood. Kandhamal district reportedly found to be the highest (31%) in prevalence of violence against elderly women as against Ganjam and Koraput districts (14%). This is mainly because of the fact that, the victims from the Kandhamal district were from comparatively rural and low socio-economic-educational background than the Ganjam and Koraput district where people were mostly tribal and enjoyed to a greater extent free and liberated life. Family violence against elderly women not only confined to marital status but women in the capacity of unmarried daughter, aunt etc are also subjected to violence. Table – 2 further tries to justify the incidence of violence against elderly women, through assessment of violence variables. The incidence of violence is justified, based on evidence of abuse, neglect; exploitation and abandonment as high percentage of women reportedly face these abuses on daily basis over years.

Present investigation with its limitations revealed that substantial percentage of elderly women in traditional and orthodox families face abuse of different nature and magnitude. The prevalence of violence ranges from 14 to 31 percent with an average of 21 percent in southern districts of Odisha, where, the women in their early family life enjoy more power, autonomy and control, and they are the victims of same power by their own family members in later years of life. There seems to be a manifestation of the vicious cycle of family violence. Illiteracy and violence are significantly correlated which is clearly reflected in the table. Illiterate rural women are found to experience more violence than the comparatively educated urban women. Further, the prevalence of violence is high due to the low living standard of people particularly the elderly and the widows

Patterns of family violence against elderly women: So far nature and type of domestic violence faced by the elderly women are concerned; it is mostly experienced in combination and is hard to indicate clear-cut distinction between the types of violence. However, with differing intensity more than one forms of violence were faced by the elderly women on daily basis and they accept it as their fate as nothing much could be done to evade the same. The responses of the victims in the present investigation indicates that elderly women endure tremendous sufferings at the hands of their own children, specially their daughters-in-law, son/s and husband, who are supposed to be their caretakers and protectors in the latter years of their lives. It is further revealed that where there is experience of multiple types of abuse the predominant type observed is that of the verbal and psychological violence.

Looking at the data of the present study as a whole helps us to understand the overall contour of domestic violence against women during their old age. However, it is essential to examine the survey responses and in-depth interviews with the result more closely in the light of its complex nature. Table-2 provides detail information on the linkage of violence against the elderly women within the domestic set-up. Further, the analysis

suggests the potential inhibiting factors of domestic violence against elderly women. In all, the cross tabulation results presented in Table-2 depicts that verbal and psychological violence against the elderly women by their close family members are comparatively more (35%) than the physical nature of assault. The incidences of physical and physiological (21%), social (22%) and economic (21%) violence against elderly women are more or less in same proportions. Women staying with their husband's express that they are physically (25%), psychologically and verbally (31%) abused; whereas the widows indicate more incidences of physical (26%) and psychological abuse (27%) as compared to other forms of violence. Those women who are single or deserted by their family members of late and staying with other family members express that they are socially and economically harassed and exploited (29%). Having more number of children and large family is never a solace for the elderly women. Very old women are experiencing both social (27%) and economical (20%) abuse and harassment by their own children and husbands. Women victims from urban areas are more physically abused (39%); whereas the rural and tribal women are verbally abused (32%). Both literate and illiterate women face violence of different types within their families during their later years of life. Women from high socio-economic status families face less physical violence, but experience comparatively more frequent verbal, psychological and social violence of different nature. Much of caste difference is not observed in the present study.

The dominating attitude and patriarchal mind-set is another indicator of violence. The typical nature and types of violence found against elderly women in Odia families are as follows: i. Psychological violence: This includes threats of any kind; verbal abuse of different nature; and harassments. Insults and annoyance such as using filthy language; humiliating actions, trying to prove the elderly woman insane; treating her as maid servant; home guard; keeping in wrongful confinement; threatening of desertion and emotional black mailing, are a few different forms of harassment. ii. Physical harassment: This includes denial of proper food and drinks; no proper care and treatment in case of ailments or any diseases. Physical abuse like pushing, dragging, forcing her to do all the household chores, pushing her against the wall, forcing her to eat and drink according to the wishes of the daughter-in-law or the perpetrator/s; confinement in house; locking her up; and violence during chronic diseases. iii. Social Isolation: During old age, individuals would like to interact, be in the company of others, and to share thoughts and feelings. However, in case of elderly women facing social isolation, feel much suffocated and isolated which in turn creates many psychological problems for themselves and other family members. The present study in many instances revealed that, elderly women are restricted to interact with relatives, neighbours and prevented from attending social functions, gatherings or celebrations. This hurts their emotions and sentiments largely. iv. Economic exploitations: When the victims own children or husband, try to use women's property or funds in improper way sometimes by force and

sometimes by emotional blackmailing, it becomes the case of economic exploitation. For example, the old age or widow pension provided by the government are not practically enjoyed or used by the elderly women. The control over the financial matters is always with the male members and in many cases with daughters-in-law, where the mothers-in-law get inferior treatment and a victim of violence. v. Self-neglect: In Odia families, it is observed in course of the investigation through verbal communication that, in most of the cases the woman herself is responsible for her pitiable condition within the family. Especially the widows, observe *bratas* (fasting) throughout the year, following typical rituals, which their health condition does not permit. They force themselves to observe the rituals that threaten their own health and safety. In some cases, although family members are against the fasting, the elderly

women are very adamant and rigid in their attitude and prefer to neglect their health. vi. Neglect and abandonment by the family members: This is a very common form of maltreatment meted to the elderly women in families. Usually the position of the uneducated women in the family is reduced to the position of household help for all practical purpose. That includes refusal or failure to carry out the elderly woman's wishes and desires. The old woman is abandoned at her later age by her own children and family members for whom she had spent all her time, energy and sacrificed her desires, wishes and feelings. In case of tribal families, it is observed that after marriage of the son, the elderly parents stay separately. Though not far from the original family, they are still not cared for. The elderly women feel they are neglected and are isolated.

Table-1
Incidence of Family Violence against Elderly Women in Six Districts of Southern Odisha

S. No.	Name of the Districts	Total Sample Surveyed	Number of Identified Victims	Percent (Average)
1.	Ganjam	347	49	14
2.	Gajapati	313	63	20
3.	Kandhamal	288	89	31
4.	Koraput	387	53	14
5.	Malkangiri	265	78	29
6.	Rayagada	321	71	22
Total		1921	403	21

Table-2
Nature and Types of Family Violence against Elderly Women in Percent

S. No.	Nature of Violence Demographic Variables	Physical and Physiological	Verbal and Psychological	Social	Economic
1.	ALL	21	35	22	21
2.	Age of Women: 60 – 70 years 71 – 80 years 81 and above	23 26 16	35 34 37	20 20 27	22 20 20
3.	Marital Status: With Husband Widow Single/Deserted	25 26 18	31 27 23	20 22 29	23 23 29
4.	No. of Children: 01 – 03 04 – 06 07 and above	27 30 20	27 24 -	23 18 50	22 27 30
5.	No. of Family Members: 01 – 05 06 – 10 11 and above	27 27 35	25 26 22	21 24 22	26 22 20

6.	Area of Living:				
	Urban:	39	19	26	21
	Rural	23	32	19	25
	Tribal	20	32	21	20
7.	Women's Education:				
	Literate	24	31	22	23
	Illiterate	28	33	22	17
8.	Socio-Economic Status:				
	High Income Group	21	26	26	26
	Middle Income Group	23	32	21	24
	Low Income Group	26	31	20	23
9.	Caste:				
	General	24	26	23	26
	Scheduled Tribe	26	32	20	21
	Scheduled Caste	22	35	21	21

Note: Because of rounding, not all rows add up to 100% exactly.

Causes of family violence against elderly women: Poverty and patriarchy are not the only attributing factors leading violence against elderly women in the family. Different reasons of violence against elderly women were obtained from the respondents in situations of open discussion and their views on precipitating factors for violence (table – 3). In general, elderly women identified their poor relationship with their daughters-in-laws with regards to lapses in household chores, looking after children and adolescents, guarding the house as key factors influencing the occurrence of violence. Besides, the inferior status of women in the families irrespective of age, class, educational background, marital status and geographical location (urban/rural/tribal), other major causes of violence are negative attitude of younger family members (21%), lack of time and interest to take care and look after the elderly (19%), poverty (18%), patriarchy, alcoholism within family (12 percent) and self-neglect by the elderly contributes to 13 percent.

The cross tabulation results present in table-3 indicate that not much variability is observed for determining causes of elderly violence in case of age and marital status. However, poverty is one of the major causes of violence in case of rural and tribal concentration, among both literate and illiterate women across all social class and caste groups. Present study further reiterates that violence is a mechanism for enforcing the gender roles and expectations within the family, even during the old age of life. Interestingly, about 69% of elderly respondents reported the same factors as precipitating violence since their early years of marriage till date.

Perpetrator/s of family violence against elderly women: The study revealed that the forerunner in violence against elderly women is the daughters-in-law (44%). Mutual jealousy, envy, intolerance between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is the major cause of the violence. Elderly women, being dependent

on family members, face the abuse within the family and it goes on cyclically – mother-in-law abusing daughter-in-law in the early years and in later years the daughter-in-law abuse the mother-in-law. Shifting power dynamics between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law usually result in acrimony and escalate in to abuse and violence. In 37% cases, even the son became a party to it.

The percent of respondents reported their son/s (37%) as the perpetrator along with their daughters-in-law (44%) which is quite a surprising revelation. Odisha being a very traditional and orthodox state, women reporting against their own son/s at later years are quite unbelievable. In a particular case, an elderly woman said – “I should not have given birth to my son”, as her son considers her as ‘burden’ and threw her out of her own house. Many a time the perpetrator/s abuses the elderly women for their own immediate self-interest without looking at long-term consequences. Table – 4 provides the detailed data of the perpetrator/s of violence against elderly women, where daughter-in-law and son are the primary perpetrators followed by husband (7%), daughter (3%), son-in-law (3%) and even grand children (4%) and other family members (3%). The most striking fact of the study is the daughter-in-law as the perpetrator of violence against the mother-in-law (elderly woman), received the highest response (40% to 50%) across all ages, marital status, from different areas, educational, socio-economic level and caste. The present study is able to get the data about the perpetrator of violence through interactions with the elderly women, who are most surprisingly prompt and vocal enough in naming their daughter-in-law, husband, sons, daughters or any other family members as the perpetrators of violence they face. Sometimes it is committed by single individual or at times jointly within the family settings. Perpetrator/s abuse elderly women for variety of reasons, but the main causes remain jealousy, dependency and vulnerability. In Odia families, having a son is considered as good luck or

fortune. Unfortunately, the present study revealed that around 37% of elderly respondents reported that their own son is responsible for their miseries in later life and they are the ones' who make her feel worthless. They feel that they should have aware of these miseries in their old age much ahead of life,

which would have made them prepared to face the situation effectively. Across all age, social strata, area, the elderly victims are very much vocal and do not hesitate to speak against their own son/s at all.

Table-3
Causes of Family Violence against Elderly Women in Percent

Sl. No.	Causes of Violence Demographic Variables	Lack of time and interest of the family members towards elderly women	Poverty	Patriarchy/ gender discriminati on	Alcoholis m in the family	Self- Neglect	Negative Attitude on the family members
1.	ALL	19	18	15	12	13	21
2.	Age of Women: 60 – 70 years 71 – 80 years 81 and above	19 20 17	18 18 18	15 15 16	12 13 10	13 12 16	21 20 23
3.	Marital Status: With Husband Widow Single/Deserted	20 15 13	16 20 18	14 13 18	12 17 16	16 14 20	21 18 16
4.	No. of Children: 01 – 03 04 – 06 07 and above	18 16 -	18 19 38	15 15 08	16 15 23	12 14 23	18 20 08
5.	No. of Family Members: 01 – 05 06 – 10 11 and above	18 19 17	20 19 20	15 14 13	14 16 15	15 12 12	18 20 21
6.	Area of Living: Urban: Rural Tribal	04 18 17	19 15 18	06 16 13	20 14 17	29 14 11	20 21 23
7.	Women's Education: Literate Illiterate	19 20	17 17	14 13	14 12	15 15	19 20
8.	Socio-Economic Status: High Income Group Middle Income Group Low Income Group	19 15 18	03 18 18	06 16 18	19 08 13	19 16 10	32 25 22
9.	Caste: General Scheduled Tribe Scheduled Caste	15 18 12	17 18 19	17 16 17	10 15 12	14 11 15	26 20 24

Note: Because of rounding, not all rows add up to 100% exactly.

Table-4
Perpetrator/s of Family Violence against Elderly Women in Percent

S. No.	Perpetrators of Violence Demographic Variables	Daughter-in-law	Son	Daughter	Husband	Son-in-law	Grand Children	Other Family Members
1.	ALL	44	37	03	07	03	04	03
2.	Age of Women: 60 – 70 years 71 – 80 years 81 and above	46 40 44	44 38 29	02 01 03	03 06 11	01 03 03	02 07 03	02 04 03
3.	Marital Status: With Husband Widow Single/Deserted	40 47 35	38 42 29	06 03 -	09 02 14	03 03 -	03 01 -	- - 21
4.	No. of Children: 01 – 03 04 – 06 07 and above	44 43 50	39 40 50	05 01 -	05 09 -	03 03 -	02 02 -	- - -
5.	No. of Family Members: 01 – 05 06 – 10 11 and above	45 47 40	39 40 40	03 03 05	03 06 05	05 01 05	01 - 05	- - -
6.	Area of Living: Urban: Rural Tribal	43 42 48	29 40 44	13 05 02	05 07 01	02 03 01	- 01 02	05 01 -
7.	Women's Education: Literate Illiterate	47 46	41 43	02 02	04 05	03 02	01 01	- -
8.	Socio-Economic Status: High Income Group Middle Income Group Low Income Group	34 47 45	28 38 40	03 04 03	03 04 03	21 03 03	03 - 03	06 02 -
9.	Caste: General Scheduled Tribe Scheduled Caste	42 48 45	39 43 42	03 01 03	08 02 04	04 01 03	02 03 01	02 - 01

Note: Because of rounding, not all rows add up to 100% exactly.

This study further indicated that, even during later stage of life, spousal and partner violence does exist even in very orthodox and traditional Odia families, but in a very subtle way. About seven percent (07%) victims openly revealed that, their husbands not only assaulted physically, but also humiliate, rebuke them especially in front of daughter-in-law to demean them and take the side of daughter-in-law for their own selfish interest. Five percent (05%) of the elderly victims even confessed that, when they were young, they had the power and control of the households. Husbands were at their back to support any act of violence against the daughter-in-law. Now that the power and control has gone into the hands of daughter-in-law, husbands changed their sides, support and loyalty towards the daughters-in-law. The entire family dynamics revolves round the issue of power dynamics that is 'power and

control'. The elderly women are the victims of the family politics. Further, the dependency of older women creates vulnerability to persons who seek to exploit dependence. It is also found that, in some cases the adult caretaking children, especially the son/s and daughters-in-law do not know how to take care or respond to or behave with the elderly mother / mother-in-law, which occur through passive neglect and ignorance.

Conclusion

All these developments have long-term implications for Indian families. In the process, patterns of behaviour and communication within family, family roles and rules, support systems and resources available to the family, and the nature of coping strategies adopted by families have also transformed.

The internal processes of family are disrupted owing to stress due to internal and external factors resulting in dysfunction. This could be due to lack of cohesion, adaptability and negative communication pattern. Role strain or role conflict of individual members, and delay or failure in carrying out individual member's expected tasks may also lead to family dysfunction. Though intra-familial factors are important, the influence of extra-familial events which impact families cannot be underplayed. Many a times, these factors play a greater role in counteracting the strengths the families may have or aggravate the negatives. The dysfunction could lead to conflict and violence and abuse of family members. It may assume any of the following forms: verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and material abuse and neglect. The major issues identified from the study are: i. In the Odishan family context, family victimization of elderly women takes place due to breakdown in social and familial relations between an elderly woman and her immediate family members (husband/son/daughter/daughter-in-law), as the family is the centre stage of human relationship and bonding. ii. The extent, to which violence against elderly women takes place, is influenced by socio-cultural norms of approved behaviour, the primacy of family values and valuation of aging in the society. iii. It is viewed as resulting from social and economic strains on households with scarce resources, in which elderly women are perceived as a burden or liability and interfering elements to their immediate family members. iv. Further, poverty, unemployment, aggression among young is also likely to contribute to increased risk of physical and psychological violence against elderly women. v. Lack of understanding and recognition on the part of the family members regarding the contribution of elderly women as care-giver, counselors, mentors, producers, policy-makers, confidants, and grandparents or great grandparents.

In summary, the study undertaken has helped to document the prevalence and patterns of family violence against elderly women in southern districts of Odisha to the extent of 21%. Family violence against elderly women does exist in our families and is a complex, and to a great extent hidden problem of our society. Gender inequalities do not disappear with age, and the disadvantages associated with being old and female are certainly considerable. It is the change in the attitude of the younger generation towards the elderly parents, which is responsible for such type of acts¹⁶. Further, the stress and tensions involved in the family life like unstable intra-spousal relationship, in-laws mal-adjustments are a few predisposing factors causing violence in Odishan families. The expression of violence is the most disgraceful component of oppression practiced against elderly females of the household. A society cannot claim itself civilized, unless there is respect for motherhood, the primary creator of lives. No society can claim to be free of such violence against mothers, aunt's, grandmothers or great grandmothers. Family and its members must be a part of the solution in order to address the epidemic

problem that is taking place within the families and affecting the social fabric to a large extent.

Both men and women have a critical role to play in reshaping and redesigning the family life for better future. Families can only grow and develop if each of the family members irrespective of age, sex and gender are provided with appropriate psycho-social climate and a platform of equality and unity within the family and social setup, which will enhance individual growth as well as the nurturance of the family as a whole. Efforts be made to ensure that family violence against elderly women come out of closed doors. The silence of sufferings and injustice against elderly women need to be broken. Hence, to openly debate this subject is a way to reduce society's tolerance towards violence against women in all stages of their lives. Further, change in mind-set and attitude through gender sensitization programs can be helpful in limiting this social evils and rebuilding the family as safe haven for the present and future generations. It demands concentrated national efforts in ensuring certain civil rights of elderly women such as right of healthy living, right to be protected from abusive husband and children, right to maintenance and care. India's recent legislation (The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act of 2007) has many of these provisions, but in reality implementation and change of mind-set of the families and society towards the elderly women is very much lacking. Finally, empowerment of the elderly is extremely essential by helping and supporting them to build self-confidence, assertiveness, create awareness of their rights and privileges provided by the society, and those elderly women who are active should be helped to make use of their skills and talents, to make them more independent and liberated free from the trapped net of the abusive families. Every elderly woman in the society should be ensured happy living and aging gracefully. Then only our society of elders can claim to be living and breathing in a free and empowered India.

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