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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

#### PATTERNS, PERPETRATORS, AND DETERMINANTS OF ELDER ABUSE IN URBAN AREAS OF EDO STATE, SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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#### Keywords

Elder Abuse,

Pattern,

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#### Abstract

**Background:** Elder abuse is rapidly gaining attention as a concern globally, undermining not only the health, dignity, and quality of life of older adults but also having attendant social and public health consequences. Nevertheless, in Nigeria and several parts of the world, it is often underreported and neglected. This study assessed the prevalence, patterns, perpetrators, and factors associated with elder abuse in two urban communities of Edo State, Nigeria.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 257 elderly persons in Benin and Uromi, Edo State, from November 2019 to February 2020, using multistage sampling.

Data were collected using a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire and analysed using IBM SPSS version 23.0. Descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted, with the level of significance set at  $p < 0.05$ . Ethical approval was obtained for the study.

**Results:** The respondents had a mean age of  $69.6 \pm 7.8$  years, with more than half aged 60-69 years (55.3%). The prevalence of elder abuse was 29.2%, and the common types were emotional abuse (85.3%), neglect (84.0%), financial abuse (78.7%), and physical abuse (69.3%). The main perpetrators were children (50.7%), followed by house helps and caregivers (17.3%). Associated factors included educational status, financial dependency, living arrangements, health status, marital status, and age.

**Conclusion:** Elder abuse is a common and serious public health issue in the study setting. Hence, there is a need for social and welfare support, community-based awareness, and interventions to promote respectful ageing and enhance the prevention and early detection of elder abuse.

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## INTRODUCTION

Elder abuse is a form of violence, which is a violation of human rights. It can manifest in several forms, including physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse, financial and material abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and abandonment, with devastating health and social consequences.<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) defines elder abuse as *“a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.”*

<sup>1</sup> Elder abuse is rapidly gaining attention as a concern globally, undermining not only the health, dignity, and quality of life of elderly persons but also having attendant negative social and public health consequences.<sup>2,3</sup> It is a significant but silent social health problem that has persisted for centuries but is now assuming epidemic proportions.<sup>4</sup> According to the WHO, elder abuse is estimated to affect about 15.7% of adults aged 60 years and above globally.<sup>1</sup> However, higher rates were projected and have been reported in low-and middle-income countries.<sup>2,5,6</sup> Studies have shown that globally, about 1 in 6 older adults (16.7%) experience elder abuse in community settings annually, with the rates also high in institutions such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities.<sup>1</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, rapid urbanisation, migration, poverty, and weakening traditional family support systems have worsened the vulnerability of older persons to abuse.<sup>7</sup> Elder abuse occurs both in urban and rural settings.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, in Nigeria and several parts of the world, it is often hidden, underreported, and neglected by society. Studies from different regions of Nigeria have documented various levels of elder abuse, yet disclosure is often limited, partly due to cultural norms, fear of victimisation, stigma, and weak institutional frameworks for the protection of the elderly.<sup>2-7,9,10</sup> Individuals who experience elder abuse face higher risks of physical and mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder, poorly managed chronic conditions,

increased medical expenses, reduced quality of life, weakened trust, strained relationships, and, in severe cases, premature death.<sup>8,11</sup>

Elder abuse can occur anywhere, including in the older person's own home, a family member's residence, or in institutional settings such as hospitals and nursing homes.<sup>8,12</sup> However, the perpetrators of elder abuse have often been identified as those closest to the victims, including children, grandchildren, relatives, spouses, and caregivers.<sup>13</sup> Some studies have also reported that not all abuse occurs within a personal relationship, as sometimes older adults are targeted because the abusers, who may be strangers, think they will be easier targets.<sup>14</sup> Others have also attributed elder abuse to how older people are treated at a societal level, especially when customs or practices take away older persons' independence and decisions are made for them.<sup>15,16</sup>

In Nigeria, few empirical studies have examined elder abuse with a focus on prevalence, patterns, and perpetrators, particularly in urban communities where social change and economic pressures are very pronounced. This study, therefore, assessed the prevalence, patterns, perpetrators, and other factors associated with elder abuse in two selected urban areas of Edo State, South-South Nigeria. These communities provide a relevant context because of their blend of traditional family structures, local customs, and modern urban dynamics. By providing evidence on the scope and nature of the problem, the findings could inform the relevant interventions and policy measures to prevent elder abuse, protect older adults, and promote healthy ageing.

## METHODS

### Study Area

The study was conducted in two urban communities in Edo State, South-South Nigeria: Benin City and Uromi. Benin City is the state capital, and the headquarters of Oredo Local Government Area (LGA), with an estimated population of about 553,300.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1: The Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

| <b>Socio-demographics</b>                | <b>Frequency (N = 257)</b> | <b>Percent (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age Group (years)</b>                 |                            |                    |
| Old elderly (60-69)                      | 142                        | 55.3               |
| Older elderly (70-79)                    | 68                         | 26.5               |
| Oldest elderly (80 and above)            | 47                         | 18.3               |
| <b>Mean Age</b>                          | <b>69.6±7.8</b>            |                    |
| <b>Sex</b>                               |                            |                    |
| Male                                     | 143                        | 55.6               |
| Female                                   | 114                        | 44.4               |
| <b>Employment Status</b>                 |                            |                    |
| Retired                                  | 88                         | 34.2               |
| Unemployed                               | 131                        | 51.0               |
| Employed                                 | 38                         | 14.8               |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                    |                            |                    |
| Single                                   | 4                          | 1.6                |
| Married                                  | 174                        | 67.7               |
| Divorced                                 | 12                         | 4.7                |
| Widowed                                  | 48                         | 18.7               |
| Cohabiting                               | 19                         | 7.4                |
| <b>Educational Qualification</b>         |                            |                    |
| No formal education                      | 44                         | 17.1               |
| Primary school                           | 60                         | 23.3               |
| Secondary school                         | 71                         | 27.6               |
| Tertiary                                 | 82                         | 31.9               |
| <b>Living Arrangement</b>                |                            |                    |
| Living alone                             | 4                          | 1.6                |
| Living with spouse                       | 90                         | 35.0               |
| Living with children (Married/Unmarried) | 195                        | 33.1               |
| Living with grandchild(ren)              | 43                         | 16.7               |
| Living with other family members         | 27                         | 10.5               |
| Living with paid caregiver               | 8                          | 3.1                |
| <b>Health Status</b>                     |                            |                    |
| Poor                                     | 117                        | 45.5               |
| Good                                     | 140                        | 54.5               |
| <b>Financial Status</b>                  |                            |                    |
| Financial self-sufficient                | 86                         | 33.5               |
| Partially self-sufficient                | 148                        | 57.6               |
| Total financial dependence               | 23                         | 8.9                |

It is a cosmopolitan city and home to several ethnic groups, with a predominantly Edo (Bini) population, alongside Esan, Afemai, Owan, and other ethnic groups, as well as other tribes such as

Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. The major religions are Christianity and Islam, and residents are mainly civil servants, artisans, and traders.

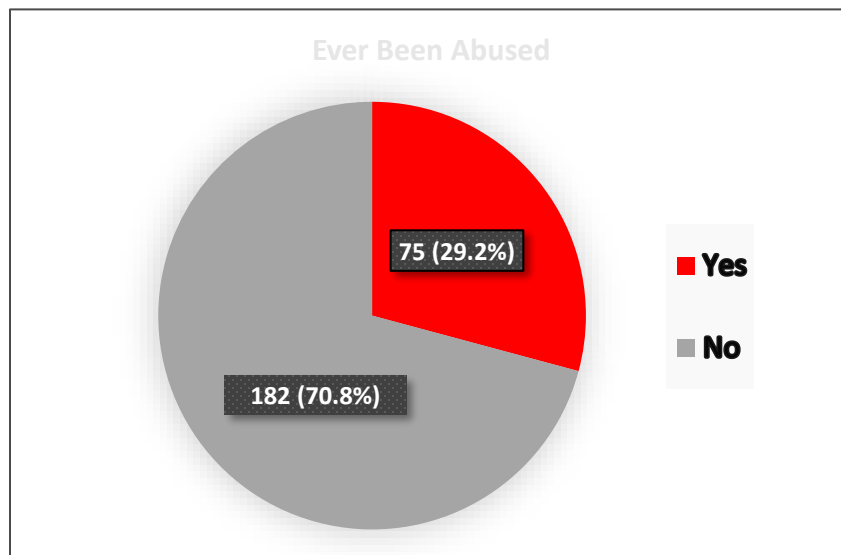


**Figure 1: Prevalence of Elder Abuse**

On the other hand, Uromi is the headquarters of Esan North-East LGA, with an estimated population of about 119,345.<sup>18</sup> The inhabitants are predominantly Esan, and the local economy is largely based on farming and trading. Christianity, mainly Catholicism, is the dominant religion.

#### **Study Design**

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used.

#### **Study Population**

All individuals aged sixty (60) years and older living in the two (2) selected urban communities.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

Inclusion Criteria: Any consenting elderly person (male and female) in the selected study areas.

Exclusion Criteria: Elderly persons with cognitive impairment, those with communication difficulties (speech defect, deaf and dumb), and those who were too ill to answer questions.

#### **Sample Size Determination**

The minimum sample size was calculated using the appropriate formula<sup>18</sup>:

$$N = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where:

N = Minimum sample size

z = Standard normal deviation, usually set at 1.96

p = 0.79 (78.8%), the prevalence of elder abuse in a previous study.<sup>4</sup>

q = 1-p

d = Degree of accuracy, usually set at 0.05

$$N = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.79 \times 0.21}{0.05^2} = 255$$

To compensate for non-response, assuming a non-response rate of 10%: 255 + (255 x 10%) = 280.

#### **Sampling Method**

Respondents were selected using a multistage sampling technique. Two senatorial districts (Edo South and Edo Central) were first selected by simple random sampling, followed by the random selection of one LGA from each (Oredo and Esan North-East). The headquarters of the selected LGAs (Benin City and Uromi) were designated as the urban study areas, with a proportionate allocation of the sample size.

**Table 2: Pattern and Perpetrators of Elder Abuse of Respondents**

| <b>Variables</b>                 | <b>Frequency<br/>(N = 75)</b> | <b>Percent (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Type of abuse experienced</b> |                               |                    |
| Physical abuse                   | 52                            | 69.3               |
| Emotional abused                 | 64                            | 85.3               |
| Neglect Abused                   | 63                            | 84.0               |
| Financial abuse                  | 59                            | 78.7               |
| Sexual Abuse                     | 0                             | 0.0                |
| <b>Perpetrators</b>              |                               |                    |
| Spouse                           | 2                             | 2.7                |
| Children (Married/Unmarried)     | 38                            | 50.7               |
| Grandchild(ren)                  | 4                             | 5.3                |
| Neighbours                       | 12                            | 16.0               |
| Relatives                        | 6                             | 8.0                |
| Househelps /Caregivers)          | 13                            | 17.3               |

Quarters within each community were then selected by simple random sampling, and all eligible households within the selected quarters were included. Household selection commenced from randomly chosen landmarks, from which a random directional technique was used to determine the initial direction of movement. Compounds were then visited systematically in a clockwise manner until the required sample size was attained.

#### **Study Instrument**

Data were collected using a pretested, interviewer-administered structured questionnaire, containing information on basic sociodemographic characteristics, experience, and perpetrators of elder abuse among the respondents. The questionnaire was adapted from the World Health Organization's instrument on elder abuse and neglect.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data were collected between November 2019 and February 2020 by the researcher and six trained Community Health Extension Workers (research assistants) who were familiar with the terrain and fluent in the relevant local languages, using an interviewer-administered structured questionnaire

written in English and interpreted into Pidgin English and local languages as deemed necessary. Of the 280 questionnaires administered, 257 were correctly completed, yielding a response rate of 92%.

#### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed using IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Version 23, with frequency tables and cross-tabulations generated. Associations between variables were tested using the Chi-square test at a 95% confidence level, with p-values <0.05 considered statistically significant.

#### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The study received ethical approval from the Ethics and Research Committee of the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Edo State, with reference number ISTH/HREC/20171023/33. An audience was sought, and permission was obtained from the Chairman of the Oredo LGA and the community leaders. The purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study were explained. Verbal and written informed consent were obtained from the respondents, and they were informed of their right to decline participation in the study or to withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

**Table 3: Factors Associated with Physical Abuse among Respondents**

| Variables                        | Never Abused | Abused   | $\chi^2$ | P-value         |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| <b>Age Group</b>                 |              |          |          |                 |
| Old Elderly                      | 114 (80.3)   | 28(19.7) | 7.575    | <b>0.023*</b>   |
| Older Elderly                    | 48(70.6)     | 20(29.4) |          |                 |
| Oldest Elderly                   | 43(91.5)     | 4(8.5)   |          |                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                       |              |          |          |                 |
| Male                             | 119(83.2)    | 24(16.8) | 2.378    | 0.123           |
| Female                           | 86(75.4)     | 28(24.6) |          |                 |
| <b>Marital Status</b>            |              |          |          |                 |
| Single                           | 4(100)       | 0(0.0)   | 3.340    | 0.503           |
| Married                          | 142(81.6)    | 32(18.4) |          |                 |
| Divorced                         | 8(66.7)      | 4(33.3)  |          |                 |
| Widowed                          | 36(75.0)     | 12(25.0) |          |                 |
| Cohabiting                       | 15(78.9)     | 4(21.1)  |          |                 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>         |              |          |          |                 |
| Retired                          | 76(86.4)     | 12(13.6) | 8.855    | <b>0.012*</b>   |
| Unemployment                     | 95(72.5)     | 36(27.5) |          |                 |
| Employed                         | 34(89.5)     | 4(10.5)  |          |                 |
| <b>Educational Qualification</b> |              |          |          |                 |
| No formal education              | 24(54.5)     | 20(45.5) | 29.556   | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Primary education                | 48(80.0)     | 12(20.0) |          |                 |
| Secondary education              | 55(77.5)     | 16(22.5) |          |                 |
| Tertiary education               | 78(95.1)     | 4(4.9)   |          |                 |
| <b>Living Arrangement</b>        |              |          |          |                 |
| Living alone                     | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   | 17.185   | <b>0.009*</b>   |
| Living with spouse               | 74(82.2)     | 16(17.8) |          |                 |
| Living with unmarried child(ren) | 14(77.8)     | 4(22.2)  |          |                 |
| Living with married child(ren)   | 43(64.2)     | 24(35.8) |          |                 |
| Living with grandchild(ren)      | 39(90.7)     | 4(9.3)   |          |                 |
| Living with other family         | 23(85.2)     | 4(14.8)  |          |                 |
| Living with paid caregiver       | 8(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   |          |                 |
| <b>Financial Status</b>          |              |          |          |                 |
| Financially self sufficient      | 78(90.7)     | 8(9.3)   | 21.082   | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Partially self-sufficient        | 116(78.4)    | 32(21.6) |          |                 |
| Total financial dependence       | 11(47.8)     | 12(52.2) |          |                 |
| <b>Health Status</b>             |              |          |          |                 |
| Poor                             | 87(74.4)     | 30(25.6) | 3.891    | <b>0.049*</b>   |
| Good                             | 118(84.3)    | 22(15.7) |          |                 |

\* P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level and significant

For participants who could not sign, thumbprints were used as documentation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the study adhered to strict protocols to ensure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

## Results

The mean age of respondents was  $69.6 \pm 7.8$  years;

more than half (142, 55.3%) were aged 60–69 years, and 143 (55.6%) were male. The majority were married, 174 (67.7%), and 82 (31.9%) had a tertiary education. Approximately one-third, 90 individuals (35.0%), resided with a spouse; 85 individuals (33.1%) lived with children; and 43 individuals (16.7%) resided with grandchildren.

**Table 4: Factors Associated with Emotional Abuse among Respondents**

| Variables                        | Never Abused | Abused   | $\chi^2$ | P-value         |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| <b>Age Group</b>                 |              |          |          |                 |
| Old Elderly                      | 110(77.5)    | 32(22.5) | 5.913    | 0.052           |
| Older Elderly                    | 44(64.7)     | 24(35.3) |          |                 |
| Oldest Elderly                   | 39(83.0)     | 8(17.0)  |          |                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                       |              |          |          |                 |
| Male                             | 111(77.6)    | 32(22.4) | 1.099    | 0.294           |
| Female                           | 82(71.9)     | 32(28.1) |          |                 |
| <b>Marital status</b>            |              |          |          |                 |
| Single                           | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   | 4.098    | 0.393           |
| Married                          | 134(77.0)    | 40(23.0) |          |                 |
| Divorced                         | 8(66.7)      | 4(33.3)  |          |                 |
| Widowed                          | 32(66.7)     | 16(33.3) |          |                 |
| Cohabiting                       | 15(78.9)     | 4(21.1)  |          |                 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>         |              |          |          |                 |
| Retired                          | 72(81.8)     | 16(18.2) | 11.609   | <b>0.003*</b>   |
| Unemployment                     | 87(66.4)     | 44(33.6) |          |                 |
| Employed                         | 34(89.5)     | 4(10.5)  |          |                 |
| <b>Educational qualification</b> |              |          |          |                 |
| No formal education              | 20(45.5)     | 24(54.5) | 40.749   | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Primary education                | 40(66.7)     | 20(33.3) |          |                 |
| Secondary education              | 55(77.5)     | 16(22.5) |          |                 |
| Tertiary education               | 78(95.1)     | 4(4.9)   |          |                 |
| <b>Living arrangement</b>        |              |          |          |                 |
| Living alone                     | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   | 20.531   | <b>0.002*</b>   |
| Living with spouse               | 70(77.8)     | 20(22.2) |          |                 |
| Living with unmarried            | 14(77.8)     | 4(22.2)  |          |                 |
| Living with married child(ren)   | 39(58.2)     | 28(41.8) |          |                 |
| Living with grandchild(ren)      | 39(90.7)     | 4(9.3)   |          |                 |
| Living with other family         | 19(70.4)     | 8(29.6)  |          |                 |
| Living with a paid caregiver     | 8(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   |          |                 |
| <b>Financial status</b>          |              |          |          |                 |
| Financially self sufficient      | 74(86.0)     | 12(14.0) | 15.017   | <b>0.001*</b>   |
| Partially self-sufficient        | 108(73.0)    | 40(27.0) |          |                 |
| Total financial dependence       | 11(47.8)     | 12(52.2) |          |                 |
| <b>Health status</b>             |              |          |          |                 |
| Poor                             | 75(64.1)     | 42(35.9) | 13.883   | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Good                             | 118(84.3)    | 22(15.7) |          |                 |

\* P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level and significant

A majority, 140 individuals (54.5%), assessed their health as good, while 86 individuals (33.5%) reported being financially stable and self-sufficient.

[Table 1] Of the respondents, 75 (29.2%) reported experiencing some form of elder abuse. [Fig. 1] The common types were emotional abuse (64; 85.3%);

**Table 5: Factors Associated with Neglect Abuse among Respondents**

| Variables                        | Never Abused | Abused   | $\chi^2$ | P-value         |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------------|
| <b>Age Group</b>                 |              |          |          |                 |
| Old Elderly                      | 111(78.2)    | 31(21.8) | 6.249    | <b>0.044*</b>   |
| Older Elderly                    | 44(64.7)     | 24(35.3) |          |                 |
| Oldest Elderly                   | 39(83.0)     | 8(17.0)  |          |                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                       |              |          |          |                 |
| Male                             | 108(75.5)    | 35(24.5) | 0.374    | 0.987           |
| Female                           | 86(75.4)     | 28(24.6) |          |                 |
| <b>Marital status</b>            |              |          |          |                 |
| Single                           | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   | 9.192    | 0.058           |
| Married                          | 138(79.3)    | 36(20.7) |          |                 |
| Divorced                         | 8(66.7)      | 4(33.3)  |          |                 |
| Widowed                          | 29(60.4)     | 19(39.6) |          |                 |
| Cohabiting                       | 15(78.9)     | 4(21.1)  |          |                 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>         |              |          |          |                 |
| Retired                          | 72(81.8)     | 16(18.2) | 5.235    | 0.073           |
| Unemployment                     | 91(69.5)     | 40(30.5) |          |                 |
| Employed                         | 31(81.6)     | 7(18.4)  |          |                 |
| <b>Educational qualification</b> |              |          |          |                 |
| No formal education              | 24(54.5)     | 20(45.5) | 24.411   | < 0.001*        |
| Primary education                | 40(66.7)     | 20(33.3) |          |                 |
| Secondary education              | 55(77.5)     | 16(22.5) |          |                 |
| Tertiary education               | 75(91.5)     | 7(8.5)   |          |                 |
| <b>Living arrangement status</b> |              |          |          |                 |
| Living alone                     | 0(0.0)       | 4(100.0) | 26.182   | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Living with spouse               | 74(82.2)     | 16(17.8) |          |                 |
| Living with unmarried child(ren) | 14(77.8)     | 4(22.2)  |          |                 |
| Living with married child(ren)   | 39(58.2)     | 28(41.8) |          |                 |
| Living with grandchild(ren)      | 39(90.7)     | 4(9.3)   |          |                 |
| Living with other family members | 16(59.3)     | 11(40.7) |          |                 |
| Living with a caregiver          | 8(100.0)     | 0(0.0)   |          |                 |
| <b>Financial Status</b>          |              |          |          |                 |
| Financially self sufficient      | 71(82.6)     | 15(17.4) | 11.837   | 0.003*          |
| Partially self-sufficient        | 112(75.7)    | 36(24.3) |          |                 |
| Total financial dependence       | 11(47.8)     | 12(52.2) |          |                 |
| <b>Health Status</b>             |              |          |          |                 |
| Poor                             | 77(65.8)     | 40(34.2) | 10.863   | 0.246           |
| Good                             | 117(83.6)    | 23(16.4) |          |                 |

\* P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level and significant

neglect, (63; 84.0%); financial abuse (59; 78.7%); and physical abuse (52; 69.3%). The main perpetrators were children (38; 50.7%), followed by

househelps/caregivers (13; 17.3%), and neighbours (12;16.0%). [Table 2]

Table 3 shows that physical abuse was significantly

**Table 6: Factors Associated with Financial Abuse among Respondents**

| Variables                        | Never abused | Abused    | $\chi^2$         | P-value         |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Age</b>                       |              |           |                  |                 |
| Old Elderly                      | 107 (75.4)   | 35(24.6)  | 7.377            | <b>0.025*</b>   |
| Older Elderly                    | 48(70.6)     | 20(29.4)  |                  |                 |
| Oldest Elderly                   | 43(91.5)     | 4(8.5)    |                  |                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                       |              |           |                  |                 |
| Male                             | 112(78.3)    | 31(21.7)  | 0.298            | 0.585           |
| Female                           | 86(75.4)     | 28(24.6)  |                  |                 |
| <b>Marital status</b>            |              |           |                  |                 |
| Single                           | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)    | 18.111           | <b>0.001*</b>   |
| Married                          | 142(81.6)    | 32(18.4)  |                  |                 |
| Divorced                         | 4(33.3)      | 8(66.7)   |                  |                 |
| Widowed                          | 33(68.8)     | 15(31.2)  |                  |                 |
| Cohabiting                       | 15(78.9)     | 4(21.1)   |                  |                 |
| <b>Employment Status</b>         |              |           |                  |                 |
| Retired                          | 72(81.8)     | 16(18.2)  | 3.092            | 0.213           |
| Unemployment                     | 95(72.5)     | 36(27.5)  |                  |                 |
| Employed                         | 31(81.6)     | 7(18.4)   |                  |                 |
| <b>Educational qualification</b> |              |           |                  |                 |
| No formal education              | 28(63.6)     | 16(36.4)  | 9.167            | <b>0.027*</b>   |
| Primary education                | 44(73.3)     | 16(26.7)  |                  |                 |
| Secondary education              | 55(77.5)     | 16(22.5)  |                  |                 |
| Tertiary education               | 71(86.6)     | 11(13.4)  |                  |                 |
| <b>Living arrangement status</b> |              |           |                  |                 |
| Living alone                     | 4(100.0)     | 0(0.0)    | 40.250           | < <b>0.001*</b> |
| Living with spouse               | 74(82.2)     | 16(17.8)  |                  |                 |
| Living with unmarried child(ren) | 14(77.8)     | 4(22.2)   |                  |                 |
| Living with married child(ren)   | 43(64.2)     | 24(35.8)  |                  |                 |
| Living with grandchild(ren)      | 0(0.0)       | 43(100.0) |                  |                 |
| Living with other family members | 12(44.4)     | 15(55.6)  |                  |                 |
| Living with a caregiver          | 8(100.0)     | 0(0.0)    |                  |                 |
| <b>Financial status</b>          |              |           |                  |                 |
| Financially self sufficient      | 71(82.6)     | 15(17.4)  | 12.729<br>(.002* | <b>0.002*</b>   |
| Partially self-sufficient        | 116(78.4)    | 32(21.6)  |                  |                 |
| Total financial dependence       | 11(47.8)     | 12(52.2)  |                  |                 |
| <b>Health status</b>             |              |           |                  |                 |
| Poor                             | 83(70.9)     | 34(29.1)  | 4.522            | <b>0.033*</b>   |
| Good                             | 115(82.1)    | 25(17.9)  |                  |                 |

\* P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level and significant

associated with age, employment status, educational level, living arrangement, financial status, and health status ( $p = 0.023, 0.012, < 0.001, 0.009, < 0.001, \text{ and } 0.049$ ), with higher prevalence among older, unemployed, less-educated, financially dependent respondents, those living with married children, and those in poor health. Sex

and marital status showed no significant association. Emotional abuse was significantly associated with employment, education, living arrangement, financial status, and health status ( $p = 0.003, < 0.001, 0.002, 0.001 \text{ \& } < 0.001$ ), with higher prevalence among unemployed, uneducated, financially dependent respondents, those living

**Table 7: Multivariable Logistic Regression Analysis of Predictors of Elder Abuse**

| Predictor                                 | B        | S.E.  | p-value | Odd ratio | 95% C.I. for Exp (B) |        |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|-------|---------|-----------|----------------------|--------|
|                                           |          |       |         |           | Lower                | Upper  |
| <b>Age (Old Elderly)</b>                  | 0 (ref.) |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Older Elderly                             | 0.620    | 0.316 | 0.049*  | 1.863     | 1.041                | 3.457  |
| Oldest Elderly                            | 1.275    | 0.458 | 0.005*  | 3.581     | 1.462                | 8.781  |
| <b>Sex (Male)</b>                         | 0 (ref.) |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Female                                    | 0.723    | 0.231 | 0.002*  | 2.061     | 1.324                | 3.236  |
| <b>Marital status (Single)</b>            | 0 (ref.) |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Married                                   | 1.586    | 0.642 | 0.001*  | 4.884     | 1.389                | 17.183 |
| Divorced                                  | 2.010    | 0.566 | <0.001* | 7.463     | 2.472                | 22.624 |
| Widowed                                   | 1.636    | 0.431 | <0.001* | 5.135     | 2.213                | 11.962 |
| Cohabiting                                | 2.126    | 0.786 | 0.007*  | 8.381     | 3.395                | 12.025 |
| <b>Employment status (Employed)</b>       | 0 (ref.) |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Unemployed                                | 1.572    | 0.424 | <0.001* | 4.816     | 2.013                | 7.270  |
| Retired                                   | 1.492    | 0.531 | 0.005*  | 4.446     | 1.492                | 6.798  |
| <b>Educational status (Tertiary)</b>      |          |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Secondary education                       | 1.222    | 0.382 | 0.001*  | 3.394     | 1.691                | 7.198  |
| Primary education                         | 1.104    | 0.423 | 0.013*  | 3.021     | 1.327                | 6.931  |
| No education                              | 1.097    | 0.309 | <0.001* | 2.995     | 1.613                | 5.118  |
| <b>Living arrangement (Living alone)</b>  |          |       |         |           |                      |        |
| with unmarried children                   | 1.593    | 0.438 | <0.001* | 4.918     | 2.148                | 11.391 |
| with married children                     | 2.087    | 0.750 | 0.005*  | 8.061     | 3.897                | 12.908 |
| with grand children                       | 2.268    | 0.909 | 0.013*  | 9.661     | 2.017                | 10.615 |
| with family members                       | 2.118    | 0.719 | 0.003*  | 8.314     | 5.011                | 9.975  |
| <b>Financial status (self-sufficient)</b> |          |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Partially self-sufficient                 | 1.832    | 0.474 | <0.001* | 6.249     | 2.473                | 9.831  |
| Financially dependent                     | 1.209    | 0.481 | 0.012*  | 3.352     | 1.317                | 8.552  |
| <b>Health status (Good)</b>               |          |       |         |           |                      |        |
| Poor Health status                        | 2.216    | 0.723 | 0.008*  | 9.171     | 2.216                | 37.783 |

\* *P-value is less than 0.05 alpha level and significant*

with married children, and those in poor health. [Table 4]. Neglect was significantly associated with age, education, living arrangement, and financial status ( $p = 0.044$ ,  $< 0.001$ ,  $< 0.001$  &  $0.003$ ), with higher prevalence among older respondents, those with no formal education, the totally financially dependent respondents, and those living with married children, while lower prevalence of neglect

was observed among the tertiary-educated, the financially self-sufficient, and those living with caregivers. [Table 5] Financial abuse was significantly associated with age, marital status, education, living arrangement, financial dependence, and health status ( $p = 0.025$ ,  $0.001$ ,  $0.027$ ,  $< 0.001$ ,  $0.002$  &  $0.033$ ), with higher prevalence of financial abuse observed among

older, widowed, less educated, financially dependent respondents, those in poor health, and those living with children. [Table 6] A multivariable logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify the predictors of elder abuse. The reference categories for the variables were old elderly, males, singles, employed, those with tertiary education, elders living alone, financially self-sufficient, and those in good health. Compared with the old elderly, the older elderly (OR = 1.863; CI = 1.00-3.45) and the oldest elderly (OR = 3.581; CI = 1.46-8.78) were approximately two and four times more likely to experience abuse, respectively. Females (OR = 2.061; CI = 1.32-3.23) were about two times more likely to be abused than males. Being married (OR = 4.884; CI = 1.389-17.183), divorced (OR = 7.463; CI = 2.472-22.624), widowed (OR = 5.135; CI = 2.213-11.962), and cohabiting (OR = 8.381; CI = 3.395-12.025) increased the likelihood of abuse by approximately five, seven, five, and eight times, respectively, compared with being single. The unemployed (OR = 4.816; CI = 2.013-7.270) and retired (OR = 4.446; CI = 1.492-6.798) were about four times more likely to be abused than the employed. Elders with secondary education (OR = 3.394; CI = 1.691-7.198), primary education (OR = 3.021; CI = 1.327-6.931), and no education (OR = 2.995; CI = 1.613-5.118) were about three times more likely to experience abuse than those with tertiary education. Living with unmarried children (OR = 4.918; CI = 2.148-11.391), married children (OR = 8.061; CI = 3.897-12.908), grandchildren (OR = 9.661; CI = 2.017-10.615), and other family members (OR = 8.314; CI = 5.011-9.975) increased the likelihood of abuse compared with living alone. Partially self-sufficient elders (OR = 6.249; CI = 2.473-9.831) and financially dependent elders (OR = 3.352; CI = 1.317-8.552) had higher odds of abuse than those self-sufficient. Poor health status (OR = 9.171; CI = 2.216-37.783) made elders about nine times more likely to experience abuse. [Table 7]

## DISCUSSION

Elder abuse is a serious public health challenge with

significant implications for the health, dignity, and quality of life of older persons, and its broader adverse social and public health consequences.<sup>4-7</sup> This study also showed that 29.2% of the respondents reported that they had experienced at least one form of abuse, and that adult children were the primary perpetrators in more than half of the cases. The predominance of emotional abuse and neglect indicates that non-physical forms of mistreatment are more common; these may also be more socially tolerated and often less visible in society, yet they have potentially damaging effects due to their chronic and psychologically debilitating nature.<sup>1,5,8</sup> In many settings, societal and cultural expectations place the responsibility for elder care on family members, with associated economic pressures, caregiver burden, and inadequate social support systems, which may predispose older persons to neglect and other forms of abuse. This pattern is consistent with reports from previous studies, which found that in the absence of effective social welfare systems, caregivers frequently experience physical, financial, and emotional stress, which may result in caregiver burden and role strain that increase the risk of neglectful and abusive behaviours toward older persons, particularly within family settings.<sup>14,21</sup> This underscores a critical public health concern because abuse occurring within the family setting may be hidden and underreported.<sup>2,5,10</sup>

The National Council on Aging reported that almost 90% of elder abuse and neglect incidents are perpetrated by a family member, with two-thirds being adult children or spouses.<sup>20,21</sup> Similarly, the Australian Institute of Family Studies also reported that perpetrators of elder abuse are often family members, mostly adult children, except for sexual abuse.<sup>22</sup> The findings of our study are consistent with these reports and signify that elder abuse is a widespread, global issue, and the profile of perpetrators is similar across different settings, cultures and regions, and is often characterised by a relationship of trust with the victim. The significant association between physical, emotional, and finan-

cial abuse and neglect with age, education, financial dependence, health status, and living arrangement highlights that elder abuse is strongly influenced by socio-demographic and household factors. Ageing may be associated with declining health and increased functional dependence, thereby reducing autonomy and bargaining power, while low educational attainment may limit awareness of rights and access to support services.<sup>23-25</sup> Financial dependence was associated with all the forms of abuse, suggesting that economic vulnerability not only increases reliance on others but may also create opportunities for exploitation and neglect.<sup>26,27</sup> This finding is particularly relevant in settings with weak social protection systems, where older persons depend largely on family members for sustenance.

All forms of abuse were significantly associated with living arrangements, with higher prevalence observed among those living with married children and other relatives, which is consistent with evidence from some previous studies.<sup>2,5,7,28</sup> This may reflect household and economic factors, leading to competition for limited resources and reduced priority given to the needs of older persons. However, the lower rates of abuse among those living with caregivers should be interpreted cautiously, as abuse in institutional or paid-care settings may be underreported due to fear of retaliation or loss of care.<sup>11</sup>

The absence of any correlation between elder abuse and sex may imply that vulnerability in old age is predominantly influenced by dependency rather than gender. However, the increased risk among widowed individuals for financial abuse highlights the significance of spousal loss as a catalyst for economic and social vulnerability, often accompanied by reduced protection and heightened reliance on offspring relatives.<sup>29,30</sup>

As people advance in age, declining physical strength, the emergence of chronic health conditions, and reduced functional capacity increase reliance on others for daily living activities. There may also be diminished social

networks, widowhood, and isolation, which may be worsened by weak social protection, economic disadvantage, and strained family relationships.

Lack of formal education was a significant risk factor for most types of elder abuse. This likely reflects the protective role of education in social development and empowerment, through its economic benefits and capacity to enhance awareness and resistance to mistreatment.<sup>5, 6,10</sup>

Living arrangement was a critical determinant of abuse, as elders residing with their children or other family members had markedly higher odds of abuse compared with those living alone. Although coresidence is culturally perceived as protective, these findings indicate otherwise and reinforce evidence that abuse frequently occurs within family settings rather than in isolation.<sup>1-5</sup> Furthermore, economic challenges may arise from reduced income due to unemployment or retirement, compounded by increased healthcare spending.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, elder abuse cannot be regarded as a random occurrence; it is patterned, with vulnerability clustering around age-related frailty and interconnected physical, social, and economic dependencies.<sup>5,10,15,24</sup>

The study has some limitations that may have affected the findings. The prevalence of elder abuse could be underreported, as some respondents may have been reluctant to disclose experiences due to fear of victimization, shame, or the desire to protect family members, although this was mitigated by private interviews and assurance of confidentiality. Additionally, cognitively impaired, severely ill, and those with communication difficulties were excluded, potentially underestimating abuse among the most vulnerable elders. Recall bias was another possible limitation; however, this was minimised by allowing respondents adequate time to remember abusive experiences within the preceding year.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Elder abuse is a serious public health challenge with significant implications on the health, dignity, and quality of life of older persons, and it is shaped by

a complex interplay of family, social, and economic factors. Emotional abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and physical abuse were reported in this study, with children of the victims as the primary perpetrators, and significant associations between abuse and age, education, financial dependence, health status, and living arrangement. These findings highlight the need for social protection and welfare support for older persons to reduce economic vulnerability and reliance on family members; targeted caregiver assistance to mitigate caregiver burden; improved access to healthcare services to address health-related challenges; and community-based awareness and interventions to promote respectful ageing, and enhance the prevention, early detection, and reporting of elder abuse.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The findings of this study underscore the need for policies that strengthen social protection, legal frameworks, and caregiver support programmes to reduce abuse among older persons.

For future research, longitudinal and mixed-methods studies are recommended to better understand causal pathways and the dynamics of abuse. Studies should also find ways to include cognitively impaired, those with no communication difficulties and severely ill older persons, who were excluded in this study but are

likely at higher risk, to provide a more comprehensive estimate of prevalence and risk factors. Further research is needed to explore cultural norms, intergenerational relationships, and household dynamics that shape elder abuse, and to evaluate the effectiveness of policy and community interventions for prevention, early detection, and response.

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

**FIO:** Study design, Data Collection & Analysis, and Manuscript Drafting.

**OED:** Study design, Data Analysis and Interpretation, Manuscript Writing and Review.

**SNA:** Study design, Design and Manuscript Writing.

**LOD:** Data Interpretation, Manuscript Writing, Review and Editing.

**DNA:** Study design, Supervision, Mentorship.

**COA:** Study design, Oversight of research progress & guidance.

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#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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