

An analysis of the legal framework for domestic violence against old age people in India.

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Abstract

The growing problem of domestic violence against older adults in India demands an immediate and comprehensive response. This paper critically analyzes the current legal framework to assess its effectiveness in protecting this vulnerable population from abuse. Existing legislation offers fragmented and limited protection. While criminal provisions address physical violence, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse often fall through the cracks. The paper delves into these gaps, highlighting the lack of a specific definition of "elder abuse" and the inadequacy of remedies for non-physical forms of violence. Furthermore, the paper examines societal challenges hindering access to justice. Stigma against reporting abuse, dependence on perpetrators for basic needs, and the complex dynamics of family relationships often deter older adults from seeking legal redress. The paper investigates these aspects, emphasizing the need for sensitizing law enforcement and judicial personnel to effectively handle elder abuse cases. Further exploration focuses on innovative legal remedies adopted in other countries, such as restraining orders and specialized elder abuse courts. Drawing insights from these models, the paper proposes potential reforms to strengthen the Indian legal framework. This includes advocating for a comprehensive elder abuse legislation, streamlined reporting procedures, and accessible support systems for victims. Ultimately, the paper seeks to bridge the gap between existing legal provisions and their implementation in reality. By analyzing the shortcomings of the current framework and proposing proactive solutions, it aims to pave the way for a more effective legal response to domestic violence against older adults in India.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Old age, Burden, International Scenario, Legal rights.

Introduction to Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence transcends mere physical blows. It's a toxic web of abuse spun in the most intimate settings, woven from manipulation, fear, and control. While often confined to the hushed whispers within closed doors, it permeates marriages, cohabitations, and families, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake.

Sadly, in India, this grim reality remains largely hidden, lurking in the shadows as one of the most under-reported crimes. The definition of domestic violence extends far beyond the brutal grasp of physical assault. It encompasses the insidious whispers of emotional abuse, the suffocating grip of financial control, the chilling sting of sexual coercion, and the relentless march of economic manipulation. Each strand of this twisted web aims at one target: power. The abuser, driven by a warped sense of dominance, seeks to subjugate, to break the spirit of their partner, child, parent, or elder.

This violence knows no boundaries. It cuts across age, gender, and socioeconomic strata. The fragile innocence of children, the weary shoulders of the elderly, the very foundation of a marriage – all are vulnerable to its poisonous touch. The consequences are tragic, echoing far beyond the physical scars. Broken lives, shattered families, and, in the most agonizing cases, the finality of death mark the tragic path of domestic violence.

But the blame cannot solely rest on the abuser's shoulders. The deafening silence of bystanders, the passive acceptance of societal norms that perpetuate the power imbalance, become unwitting accomplices. We, the mute spectators, become the shadows within the shadows, perpetuating the cycle of violence through inaction.

Breaking free from this darkness requires a multifaceted approach. Firstly, acknowledging the insidious nature of domestic violence, in all its forms, is crucial. Conversations need to be initiated, not confined to hushed tones and hidden

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corners. Empowering victims through access to support networks, legal aid, and safe shelters is imperative. Holding abusers accountable, both through legal action and social condemnation, sends a powerful message. Finally, addressing the root causes – economic dependence, societal inequalities, and the lack of awareness – is vital to dismantle the very foundation of this monstrous crime.

Domestic violence is not a private matter to be swept under the rug. It is a societal stain, a malignant tumour requiring immediate and collective action. Only by shattering the silence, illuminating the shadows, and dismantling the power dynamics that feed this evil can we build a future where homes are truly sanctuaries, not battlegrounds.

Definition of old aged people

Defining "old age" is less a matter of pinning down a single number and more an intricate dance with cultural context, biological realities, and the ever-shifting sands of expectation. While the developed West often sets the retirement age around 65, a convenient marker from Bismarck's 19th-century Germany, this fails to capture the multifaceted tapestry of ageing across the globe.

The United Nations, with its broader lens, considers 60 years the threshold, acknowledging the diversity of experiences. But even this seemingly global benchmark falters when we step into the vibrant yet challenging landscape of developing nations. Take Sub-Saharan Africa, where a 2001 report by the U.S. National Institute on Aging and the WHO paints a different picture. Here, 50 marks the dawn of old age, a stark contrast to the Western perspective.

This stark difference isn't a mere quirk of geography. It's deeply rooted in contrasting realities. In developing countries, where life expectancy remains lower, chronological age takes a backseat to functionality. Old age is defined not by the number etched on a birth certificate, but by the ability to contribute actively to the community. A society struggling with resource limitations and a younger workforce needs all hands on deck, making even those in their 50s considered elders deserving of respect and support.

The historical lens also reveals the fluidity of this concept. Ancient cultures, from the Greeks to the Chinese, often defined old age around 60, aligning with the UN's current benchmark. Yet, even within these societies, the perception of "senior" was flexible, adapting to societal needs and individual circumstances. A physically vigorous 70-year-old farmer might be considered more youthful than a sedentary 50-year-old scholar.

So, where does this leave us? Grappling with the limitations of a single, universal definition. Ageing is not a binary switch flipping at a specific number. It's a spectrum, a nuanced dance between physical decline, societal expectations, and individual experiences. To truly understand a person's place within this spectrum, we must move beyond arbitrary numbers and delve into the intricate tapestry of their context, their capabilities, and their unique story.

This deeper understanding has profound implications. In developing countries, it means recognizing the crucial contributions of those deemed "old" by Western standards. It means designing social programs that support their continued engagement, ensuring their valuable knowledge and skills are not lost. In the developed world, it means challenging the rigidity of retirement ages and embracing the potential of a vibrant elderly population.

Ultimately, age is but a number, a convenient shorthand for a complex reality. By acknowledging the richness and fluidity of ageing, we can move beyond stereotypes and build societies that celebrate the diverse contributions of people at every stage of life.

Reasons for violence against old age people

Lack of adjustment, emotional and profitable dependence on the abusers is the main cause of abusing. Corrosion of values, apathetic station of society, fiscal heads and health related issues of elders are some of the causes leading to the abuse. Absence of meaningful social attachment among aged people and other family members to some extent is also responsible. Attitude and relational issues also add energy to the fire. In utmost of the cases, senior people were victimized of being alone as they've no choice to stay alone.

The abuse can be of the following categories:

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is an intentional act of infliction of pain or an injury, physical coercion or physical restraint.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse: This is caused by mental torture and causes pain to the emotional sentiments. This includes humiliation, habitual blaming, scapegoating, ignoring the elderly person, isolating an elder from friends and get together activities.

Financial Abuse: Financial abuse involves improper use of the financial resources and fund of the elders. This can include misuse of elder person's bank details and monetary resources, stealing of cash, checks on the incomes, forging the signature of elders and engaging in identity theft.

Sexual Abuse: This includes contacting an elderly person without their consent. Such aspects can involve physical sexual acts along with activities such as showing an elderly person pornographic material, forcing the person to watch sexual acts, or forcing the elders to undress.

Healthcare fraud and abuse: These involves unethical practices carried by doctors, nurses, hospital staff and other professional caretakers. These include acts such as improper healthcare services being provided, overcharging for medical care or services, overmedicating or under medicating, recommending unnecessary and fraudulent treatments for their illness, and other allied abuse.

Elder Neglect: This includes failure to take necessary care and fulfil requisite. Neglecting the elder's results in a negative impact on their mental health. It can either be intentional or unintentional. It is pertinent to note that neglect constitutes more than half of all reported cases of elder abuse. Further,

it is important to consider the fact that self-neglect amongst elders is also a growing issue, the incapacity to maintain personal hygiene, living in unsanitary conditions, the inability to pay bills and improper management of their medication are results of neglect and disregard.

Another issue is related to lack of mindfulness about requisite medium of legal vintles for the frequentness of senior abuse. All these causes together make the situation worse.

Legal framework

After concluding the notion of senior citizen abuse, its divisions and effects faced by the seniors, it's meaningful to be accustomed with the legal frame mechanized for them. There are many constitutional provisions and laws which give safeguard to guard the rights of elders and help their abuse. Part IV of the Constitution. i.e. the Directive Principles of State Policy(DPSP) is one similar frame that seeks to cover the claims of the older. Likewise, although not explicitly expressed as a Fundamental Right, the bar reads the rights of the senior as a hand of Article 21 of the Constitution. Below are similar provisions assuring safeguard to the older.

a) Provisions under DPSP:

Article 38(1) of the Indian Constitution is a powerful statement of intent, outlining the State's fundamental commitment to the welfare of its people. It goes beyond mere lip service, actively calling for the creation of a "social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all institutions of the national life." This intricate and expansive phrase resonates with profound implications for how India should be governed and how its citizens should experience life.

Understanding the Pillars of Justice:

The article identifies three central pillars of justice: social, economic, and political. Each represents a distinct yet interconnected facet of a holistic societal framework.

Social justice stands for the elimination of discrimination and unequal treatment based on factors like caste, religion, gender, or ethnicity. It seeks to create a society where dignity and opportunity are accessible to all, regardless of their background.

Economic justice aims to bridge the gap between the wealthy and the underprivileged. It calls for an equitable distribution of resources, fair wages, and accessible social safety nets, ensuring that everyone has the ability to meet their basic needs and participate meaningfully in the economy.

Political justice emphasizes equal participation in the democratic process, guaranteeing free and fair elections, freedom of expression and assembly, and accountability of those in power. It ensures that all voices are heard and considered in shaping the nation's future.

Institutions as Mirrors of Justice:

The phrase "inform all institutions of the national life" underscores the transformative potential of Article 38(1). It's not enough to simply enact laws or policies; the principles of justice must permeate every aspect of public life, from

the judiciary and legislature to the education system and healthcare services. It calls for:

Judicial reform: Ensuring courts are fair, accessible, and expeditious, providing equal justice for all regardless of social standing.

Legislative accountability: Creating laws that uphold and promote all forms of justice, while scrutinizing existing laws for discriminatory or exclusionary provisions.

Equitable access to education and healthcare: Guaranteeing quality education and healthcare services to all, regardless of economic background, so that individuals can realize their full potential and lead healthy lives.

Inclusive economic policies: Formulating policies that encourage inclusive growth, empower marginalized communities, and create decent employment opportunities for all.

Empowering local communities: Decentralizing governance and giving communities a greater say in decisions that affect their lives.

Minimizing Inequalities: A Constant Pursuit:

The article further compels the State to "minimize the inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities." This is a continuous endeavour, acknowledging that perfect equality may be an ideal, but the constant effort to strive towards it is paramount. This translates to:

Affirmative action policies: Addressing entrenched social and economic disadvantages through targeted programs and initiatives that level the playing field for historically marginalized groups.

Progressive taxation: Implementing tax systems that distribute the burden fairly, where those with greater resources contribute more, thereby reducing economic disparities.

Investing in social infrastructure: Prioritizing investments in education, healthcare, sanitation, and housing, particularly in underserved areas, to bridge the gap in access to essential facilities.

Protecting vulnerable groups: Enacting and enforcing laws that safeguard the rights of children, women, minorities, and other vulnerable sections of society.

A Living Document, a Constant Challenge:

Article 38(1) is not a static directive but a living document, continually evolving through interpretation and implementation. It demands ongoing dialogue, critical evaluation, and adaptation to meet the evolving needs and challenges of society. It recognizes that the pursuit of justice is a constant challenge, requiring unwavering commitment from both the State and its citizens.

By understanding the depth and breadth of Article 38(1), we can hold our government accountable and actively engage in building a more just and equitable society. Only by collectively striving towards a national life where social, economic, and political justice informs everything we do can we truly uphold the spirit of this powerful constitutional guarantee.

While pensions certainly represent a vital tool in fulfilling the State's obligation under Article 39(e), framing the article solely through that lens would be a significant underestimation of its scope and intent. The article envisions a far more intricate web of interventions aimed at safeguarding the "health and strength" of workers across their life cycle, not just in their post-retirement phase.

Understanding the article's true depth requires dissecting its key components:

1. Protecting the Vulnerables:

Children: The article specifically mentions "children of tender age," emphasizing the State's responsibility to shield them from exploitative labor practices. This translates to robust child labor laws, effective enforcement mechanisms, and investments in quality education to provide viable alternatives to work.

Women: Beyond mere equal pay, the article acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities faced by women workers. This necessitates policies addressing sexual harassment, maternity leave, and ensuring safe working environments.

Formal and Informal Sectors: The article's reach extends beyond the formal sector. The State must protect the health and strength of workers in the vast informal economy through social security schemes, health insurance coverage, and occupational safety regulations tailored to their specific risks.

2. Beyond Physical Abuse:

The article's concern extends beyond preventing physical exploitation to protecting workers from:

Mental and emotional stress: This requires addressing workplace bullying, promoting work-life balance, and ensuring access to mental health services.

Wage theft and unfair labor practices: This necessitates strong labor unions, effective grievance redressal mechanisms, and stringent enforcement of minimum wage laws.

Exposure to hazards: The State must enact and enforce stringent occupational health and safety regulations across all sectors, minimizing risks of accidents and occupational diseases.

3. Empowering Choice, Not Just Securing Survival:

While pensions contribute to a dignified post-retirement life, the article goes beyond mere survival. It seeks to ensure that citizens are not "forced by economic necessity" into unsuitable work. This calls for:

Investment in education and vocational training: Enabling individuals to acquire skills that translate into decent, fulfilling work opportunities.

Promoting entrepreneurship and skill development programs: Equipping individuals with the tools and resources to create their own livelihoods.

Redesigning work structures: Encouraging flexible work arrangements, promoting work-life balance, and fostering work environments that prioritize workers' well-being.

Pensions as a Piece of the Puzzle:

Pensions play a crucial role in ensuring financial security and protecting the health and strength of retirees. However, viewing them as the sole answer to Article 39(e) risks neglecting the article's broader vision. The State's responsibility encompasses a wide range of interventions, starting from safeguarding children from labor to building an ecosystem that empowers workers to make informed choices and lead fulfilling lives.

By embracing this holistic understanding of Article 39(e), we can move beyond a mere "pensions-centric" approach to worker protection. We can foster a society where work does not compromise health, strength, or dignity, and where the pursuit of a meaningful life remains accessible to all, regardless of age, gender, or economic background. Only then will we truly fulfill the promise enshrined within this powerful constitutional directive.

Article 41 of the Indian Constitution, nestled within the Directive Principles of State Policy, stands as a powerful testament to the nation's commitment to social welfare and human dignity. It lays out a comprehensive vision, albeit aspirational, for a society where every citizen has access to the fundamental necessities for a fulfilling life: the right to work, education, and public assistance in times of vulnerability.

The Right to Work: At the heart of Article 41 lies the recognition that work is not just a means of income, but a source of self-worth and societal contribution. The state is entrusted with the responsibility to create an environment where every individual has the opportunity to engage in meaningful employment, commensurate with their skills and abilities. This can be achieved through various means, including promoting economic growth, fostering skill development, and regulating labour practices to ensure fair wages and working conditions.

Education as the Bedrock: Education is envisioned as the bedrock upon which a just and equitable society is built. Article 41 emphasizes the state's obligation to provide effective and accessible education to all citizens, regardless of their social background or economic status. This includes not just primary and secondary education, but also higher education and vocational training, enabling individuals to reach their full potential and contribute effectively to the nation's progress.

A Safety Net for Vulnerability: Recognizing that life is fraught with uncertainties and unforeseen circumstances, Article 41 extends its reach to provide a safety net for those facing unemployment, old age, sickness, and disability. In such situations, the state is mandated to offer public assistance, ensuring basic necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare are met. This social security system, while constantly evolving, aims to prevent individuals from falling into destitution and despair, upholding their right to a life of dignity.

The Limits and the Journey: It is crucial to acknowledge the qualified nature of Article 41. The phrase "within the limits of its economic capacity and development" underscores that the state's ability to fulfil these aspirations is contingent upon its resources and growth. This necessitates a delicate balancing

act between immediate needs and long-term development strategies. Nevertheless, the mere presence of this article in the Constitution serves as a constant reminder to the state and its citizens of the ultimate goal – a society where economic progress translates into tangible improvements in the lives of all.

A Catalyst for Change: Article 41 has served as a powerful catalyst for social reform and policy initiatives in India. It has inspired the enactment of various laws and programs aimed at promoting employment, education, and social security. While challenges remain, the ongoing pursuit of these ideals continues to shape the nation's trajectory towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

In conclusion, Article 41 stands as a beacon of hope and a reminder that the Indian Constitution envisions a society where prosperity is not enjoyed by a few, but shared by all. It is a call to action, urging the state and its citizens to work together towards a future where the right to work, education, and a life free from hardship is not a privilege, but a fundamental right for every Indian.

b) Legislations and policies protecting the rights of Elders

Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956: The act empowers senior people with a legal right to claim maintenance from their kids. It beyond stipulates that it's the liability of a person to keep up their aging aged parents in the circumstance they're incapable to keep up themselves. It's significant to allow that the said law of 1956 is applicable to Hindus only. Analogous laws are set up in Muslim laws, Christian laws, and indeed Parsi laws.

The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973: The Criminal Procedure Code is a secular law which is applicable to every citizen of the country. Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code allows maintenance to parents and woman which laterally covers the provisionary conservation of elder parents icing the profitable safeguard of the elders. To claim maintenance under this law, it's mandatory to establish that the parents are disregarded and don't have sufficient means of earnings to keep up themselves.

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents Act, 2007: Up until 2007, there existed no sui generis or separate legislation simply negotiating the effects looked by elders. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 seeks to frame it a legal burden for kids and heirs at law to give sufficient maintenance to elderly citizens, and proposes to make provisions for state governments to prove old age homes in every nabe [1].

National Policy for Older People, 1999: The Policy was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the year 1999 to improve the situations of the older citizen of the society. This policy was established in pursuance of Article 41 of the Constitution which mandates the state to look after the well-being of the older person [2]. The National Policy seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are national concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored or marginalized. The goal of the National Policy is the well-

being of older persons. It aims to strengthen their legitimate place in society and to help them to live the last phase of their life with purpose, dignity and peace. The policy provides that the State will extend support in terms of financial security, health care, shelter, welfare and other needs of older persons, provide protection against abuse and exploitation, make available opportunities for the development of the potential of older persons, seek their participation, and provide services to improve the quality of their lives.

Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme: Ministry of Rural Development of India has introduced Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) in the year 2007. This scheme provided central assistance by providing pension of Rs. 200/- per month to persons above 60 years of age and Rs. 500/- per month to persons above 80 years of age who belong to households below the poverty line. The State Government is also under the obligation to provide benefits to the senior citizens. Accordingly, the State Government of Maharashtra, under Shraavanbal Seva Rajya Nivruttivetan Yojana provides Rs. 400 to the citizens who are eligible for the scheme.

National Programme for the Health Care for the Elderly: The National Programme for the Health Care for the Elderly is an articulation of the International and national commitment of the Government as envisaged under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), National Policy on Older Person (NPOP) adopted by the Government of India in 1999 and Section 20 of "The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents Act, 2007" dealing with provisions for medical care of Senior Citizen. The main objective of the programme is to provide preventive, curative and rehabilitative services to the elderly persons at various level of health care delivery system of the country [2,3].

A Central Sector Scheme to improve the quality of life of the Senior Citizens: The main objective of the Scheme is to improve the quality of life of the Senior Citizens by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care and entertainment opportunities and by encouraging productive and active ageing through providing support for capacity building of State/ Union Territory, Governments/ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) / local bodies and the community at large. This scheme was revised in 2018 to improve the conditions of the senior citizens. This scheme was implemented to undertake various programmes to ensure that the senior citizen gets the basic needs including proper health care [4].

Support of India Judiciary against Elder Abuse in India:

Due to increase in instances of Elderly Abuse in India, the Indian Judiciary system has taken up major steps to protect the rights of the senior citizens by directing the State Governments to implement various schemes for the benefits of the older and infirm parents. The judiciary has played an important role in protecting the rights of the older parents who are deprived of the maintenance.

Some of the remarkable moves taken by the Indian Judiciary:

Santosh Surendra Patil Vs. Surendra Narasgopnda Patil: In this case, the Court held that it is the legal responsibility to care of the parents. The Court also directed the State Government to act as the guardians of the Senior Citizens and age-old infirm parents.

Sunny Paul & Anr. Vs. State Nct of Delhi &Ors.: The Delhi High Court has ruled that children who abuse their parents while staying with them in their house can be evicted from the property. The Court said that “*As long as the parents have the legal possession of the property, they can evict their abusive adult children.*” The Court further directed the Delhi government to amend rule 22 of the Delhi Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Rules, 2009 and formulate an action plan to protect the life and property of senior citizens as the Delhi government’s rules, 2009 allowed a senior citizen to complain to district authorities to evict abusive children only from a self-acquired property, despite the fact that the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 makes no such distinction and gives protection to parents even in a rented accommodation.

Kirtikant D. Vadodaria Vs. State of Gujarat: The Supreme Court opined that old and infirm parents are entitled to maintenance under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 from their daughter the same way as from a son.

Vijaya Manohar Arbat Vs. Kashi Rao Rajaram Sawai and Anr.: The Supreme Court rightly observed that a married daughter who is self-sufficient has to provide maintenance to the father or mother who does not have any son. Also, the stepmother is equally entitled to maintenance as the father.

Jharkhand Senior Citizen Advocates Service Sansthan and Another Vs. State of Jharkhand: The High Court of Jharkhand directed the state to setup Old Age Homes in each district of the State with the immediate effect and to arrange separate queues in hospitals and other steps for ease of elderly people while availing medical treatment.

Shortcomings of existing Legal Framework in India

India boasts a robust legal framework safeguarding human rights and tackling domestic violence. However, when it comes to protecting older adults within their own homes, the system reveals gaps and limitations, leaving thousands vulnerable to abuse and neglect [5].

Inadequate Recognition of Elder Abuse:

The core challenge lies in the very definition of domestic violence. Most existing laws, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (DV Act) of 2005, primarily focus on violence against women within a marital relationship. While the Act offers some protection to elderly mothers residing with their married children, it fails to explicitly acknowledge the diverse forms of abuse experienced by older individuals across family structures. This excludes many vulnerable groups, such as unmarried daughters, widowed fathers, or same-sex couples, from seeking legal recourse.

Limited Scope of Existing Laws:

Even when applicable, existing laws like the DV Act face limitations in addressing the specific needs of older victims. Their physical vulnerability necessitates tailored protection measures, including assistance with medical interventions, safe housing alternatives, and support services catering to age-related issues like dementia or memory loss. The current framework lacks clarity on these specialized needs, making it difficult for authorities to understand and address them effectively [6].

Challenges in Proof and Reporting:

Older adults often face unique hurdles in reporting abuse. Shame, fear of retaliation, and dependence on their abusers can create a culture of silence. Additionally, proving abuse in court can be particularly challenging for them. Physical evidence may be absent, and witness testimonies from family members might be reluctant or unreliable. Furthermore, cognitive decline due to age can impede their ability to clearly articulate their experiences, further undermining their legal case.

Inadequate Enforcement and Implementation:

Even when legal recourse is available, enforcement remains a key challenge. Lack of awareness among older adults, coupled with inefficient grievance redressal mechanisms, often prevent them from accessing essential support. Additionally, dedicated courts or tribunals specializing in elder abuse are scarce, and existing judicial systems may not be adequately equipped to handle age-related complexities. This results in delays, dismissals, and ultimately, perpetuates the cycle of abuse [7].

Financial Dependence and Lack of Alternatives:

Financial dependency on their abusers significantly restricts older adults' options. Leaving an abusive home often implies losing their only source of income and support. The limited availability of affordable assisted living facilities or geriatric care services further restricts their choices, forcing them to endure abuse out of sheer desperation.

Intersectional Vulnerabilities:

Vulnerability to elder abuse intersects with other forms of marginalization. Gender, caste, religious minority status, or disability can create additional layers of oppression and discrimination, making specific groups even more susceptible to abuse and neglect. The legal framework needs to take these intersections into account to ensure comprehensive protection for all older adults.

International Scenario

Elder abuse, encompassing physical, emotional, financial, and sexual mistreatment, has emerged as a significant international public health crisis. Recognized by leading intergovernmental bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN), it demands the urgent attention of healthcare systems, social welfare agencies, policymakers, and the global community. The rapidly aging population worldwide

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exacerbates this issue, projecting millions more individuals vulnerable to abuse in the coming years [8]. Addressing elder abuse requires a comprehensive understanding of its diverse manifestations, causes, and preventative measures across various cultural and socio-economic contexts.

Global Dimensions of Elder Abuse:

While elder abuse transcends geographical boundaries, its manifestations and responses exhibit considerable variability across nations. Cultural attitudes towards aging, family dynamics, legal frameworks, and available resources shape the nature and prevalence of the problem. Developed nations like those with multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) often adopt proactive intervention strategies, while resource-constrained low-income countries might prioritize awareness campaigns due to limited public understanding. Recognizing these differences is crucial for tailoring effective prevention and intervention approaches.

Understanding the Scope and Scale:

Despite growing research, significant knowledge gaps remain concerning elder abuse in low-income countries. High-income regions dominate existing studies, limiting our understanding of culturally specific forms of abuse and relevant prevention and treatment modalities. Additionally, transferring resource-intensive service models like adult protective services might not be feasible in resource-scarce settings. Expanding research, particularly multi-country studies incorporating low-income nations, is vital to accurately measure the global scale of the problem and inform appropriate interventions [9].

Causes and Risk Factors:

Elder abuse emerges from a complex interplay of individual, family, and societal factors. Individual vulnerabilities like physical or cognitive decline, dependence on others, and social isolation increase the risk. Family dynamics such as caregiver stress, financial strain, and intergenerational conflict play a significant role. Societal factors including ageism, lack of awareness, inadequate legal frameworks, and limited elder-care services contribute to the problem. Understanding these complex dynamics is crucial for designing effective prevention strategies [10].

Prevention: A Proactive Approach:

Prioritizing preventative measures holds immense potential in tackling elder abuse. Multipronged interventions encompassing individual, family, and community levels are critical. Empowering older adults through knowledge of their rights, financial security, and social connections can boost their resilience [11]. Supporting families through caregiver training, stress management programs, and respite care can reduce vulnerability within the home. Raising public awareness through campaigns, training healthcare professionals, and strengthening legal frameworks can create a more protective environment for elders [12].

Intervention and Support:

Despite robust prevention efforts, some cases of abuse will inevitably occur. Effective intervention systems are crucial for

protecting victims and holding perpetrators accountable [13]. These systems include confidential reporting mechanisms, trained specialists to assess situations and provide support, accessible legal assistance, and safe housing options for victims. Culturally-sensitive approaches that consider gender, religious, and ethnic backgrounds are essential to ensure successful intervention.

The Role of Technology:

Technological advancements present promising avenues for enhanced prevention and intervention. Telehealth and telecare services can improve accessibility to healthcare and social support for isolated elders. Assistive technologies and wearable devices can monitor potential abuse situations and trigger alerts. However, concerns about privacy, digital literacy, and equitable access need to be addressed for effective implementation [14].

Global Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:

Addressing elder abuse necessitates a global collaborative effort. Sharing best practices across countries, particularly between high- and low-income settings, can accelerate progress. Facilitating international research collaboration, developing culturally adapted interventions, and establishing knowledge-sharing platforms are crucial steps towards tackling this global challenge.

Elder abuse represents a significant public health crisis demanding immediate and comprehensive action. Recognizing its global scope, diverse manifestations, and complex causes is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies [15]. Prioritizing research, particularly in low-income nations, fostering international collaboration, and leveraging technology hold immense potential in creating a safer world for our aging population. By uniting our efforts, we can ensure that elders across the globe live their lives with dignity, respect, and freedom from abuse.

Conclusions & Suggestions

Your statement rightly emphasizes the importance of treating senior citizens with respect and valuing their contributions to society. As the most experienced members of our communities, they hold a wealth of knowledge and wisdom accumulated over decades. Recognizing their sacrifices, guidance, and role in shaping our families and communities is crucial.

Beyond Holistic Care:

While providing for their physical needs through holistic care is essential, respecting senior citizens involves much more. It's about actively engaging them in our lives, recognizing their capabilities, and creating opportunities for them to share their wisdom and experience. We must move beyond a purely service-oriented approach and embrace them as valuable contributors to our social fabric.

Intergenerational Bonds:

Connecting with senior citizens strengthens the intergenerational fabric of our society. Their stories, knowledge of traditions, and life experiences are invaluable treasures

that bridge the gap between generations. Grandparents play a crucial role in nurturing their grandchildren, imparting family values, and offering a unique perspective on life. Fostering these connections not only enriches the lives of seniors but also broadens the worldview of younger generations.

Embracing Active Aging:

Age should not be a barrier to participation and contribution. Many senior citizens possess skills, talents, and a wealth of knowledge that can still benefit society. Encouraging their involvement in volunteer work, mentoring programs, artistic pursuits, and community initiatives enables them to lead active and fulfilling lives while contributing their expertise and experience.

Beyond Family Walls:

The responsibility of caring for and respecting senior citizens extends beyond immediate family circles. The entire community plays a crucial role in building an environment where they feel valued and supported. This includes advocating for their rights, promoting age-friendly policies, and actively combating ageism and discrimination.

Recognizing Past Contributions:

Acknowledging the sacrifices and contributions senior citizens have made throughout their lives is a vital element of respect. Celebrating their achievements, showcasing their wisdom, and honouring their history fosters a sense of belonging and appreciation.

Shifting Perspective:

Ultimately, respecting senior citizens necessitates a shift in perspective. We must move beyond simply viewing them as recipients of care and recognize them as individuals with valuable experiences, skills, and contributions to offer. Fostering genuine connections, appreciating their wisdom, and creating opportunities for active participation empowers them to lead fulfilling lives and contributes to a more inclusive and enriching society for all.

It acknowledges the existence of laws and programs aimed at protecting the rights and well-being of senior citizens in India, it also rightly highlights the gap between existing measures and the reality of their living conditions. Addressing this discrepancy requires a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the elderly population and a multi-pronged approach that goes beyond mere legal frameworks and financial schemes.

Understanding the Gaps and Challenges:

Limited Awareness and Access: Many senior citizens, particularly in rural areas, remain unaware of their rights and available support systems. Accessing services can be further hindered by lack of information, mobility constraints, and language barriers.

Financial Insecurity: Despite government financial schemes like pensions, a significant portion of the elderly population still grapples with economic hardship. Rising inflation, inadequate pension amounts, and dependence on dwindling family resources exacerbate this vulnerability.

Social Isolation and Loneliness: Loss of spouses, children moving away, and limited social interaction can lead to loneliness and isolation, negatively impacting mental health and well-being.

Physical and Mental Health Concerns: Age-related ailments, lack of access to quality healthcare, and stigma surrounding mental health in older adults further contribute to their vulnerability.

Inadequate Elder Care Infrastructure: The shortage of trained caregivers, geriatric care facilities, and accessible senior-friendly services creates major gaps in meeting the specific needs of older adults.

Discrimination and Ageism: Negative stereotypes and ageism within society and even families can marginalize older adults, limiting their opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution.

Beyond Laws and Programs: Moving Towards Integrated Solutions:

Raising Awareness and Building Capacities: Extensive awareness campaigns in local languages through various channels like community radio, mobile apps, and village meetings can empower senior citizens with knowledge of their rights, available services, and grievance redressal mechanisms.

Holistic Care and Health Support: Strengthening the healthcare system to provide accessible and affordable geriatric care, addressing stigmatized mental health issues, and promoting preventive healthcare for older adults are crucial.

Promoting Active Aging and Social Inclusion: Creating opportunities for volunteering, skill development, intergenerational exchanges, and recreational activities can combat social isolation and empower senior citizens to lead active and fulfilling lives.

Strengthening Family and Community Support: Training family caregivers, promoting intergenerational co-habitation, and building strong community support networks can provide vital assistance and combat social isolation.

Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Support: Telehealth services, assistive technologies, and mobile applications can bridge the gap in geriatric care access, especially in remote areas.

Ensuring Policy Coherence and Effective Implementation: Streamlining existing laws and programs, allocating adequate resources, and ensuring efficient implementation with robust monitoring mechanisms are essential for their effectiveness.

Combating Ageism and Promoting Dignity: Raising awareness about ageism, challenging negative stereotypes, and promoting respect for elderly people through education campaigns and media representation are crucial for creating a more inclusive society.

Investing in Research and Innovation: Continuous research on aging, dementia, and age-related health issues can inform improved care models, interventions, and support systems for senior citizens.

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Moving Forward: A Collective Responsibility:

Addressing the needs of senior citizens requires a collective effort from individuals, families, communities, NGOs, policymakers, and healthcare professionals. By combining legal frameworks with comprehensive care options, social inclusion initiatives, and a shift in attitudes towards aging, we can create a society that respects, values, and supports its elders.

It highlights the need to move beyond laws and programs towards a more holistic approach that addresses the social, health, and psychological needs of senior citizens. By recognizing the diverse challenges they face and actively working towards solutions, we can ensure that India's elderly population can live with dignity, security, and respect.

We all share ethical and social responsibility towards protecting and supporting our elder citizens. However, it goes beyond mere assistance. It's a call to rediscover our fundamental moral values and rebuild the crumbling societal framework that once upheld respect and care for older adults.

From Duty to Imperative: A Moral Reckoning:

Caring for senior citizens isn't merely an act of charity or a societal obligation; it's a profound moral imperative. We stand at a crossroads where the rapid pace of modernity and individualistic pursuits threaten to unravel the very fabric of compassion and intergenerational responsibility that binds us.

Reassessing Traditional Values:

The changing social landscape threatens the erosion of time-honored values like familial respect, intergenerational solidarity, and a sense of community. These weren't mere antiquated customs; they were the bedrock upon which societies fostered care and support for their elders. Ignoring these values risks leaving our seniors adrift in a sea of isolation and neglect.

Beyond Assistance: Resurrecting Dignity and Respect:

Our responsibility extends beyond providing basic necessities. Senior citizens deserve to live with dignity, respect, and a sense of purpose. We must actively engage them in our lives, valuing their wisdom and experience, and offering opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution.

Protecting Birthrights: Redefining Justice:

Ensuring their fundamental rights isn't a privilege but a birthright. Protecting them from abuse, exploitation, and financial insecurity is our collective moral obligation. We must advocate for robust legal frameworks, social safety nets, and accessible healthcare systems that guarantee a safe and secure existence for our elders.

Reclaiming our Humanity: A Collective Responsibility:

Addressing the challenges faced by senior citizens transcends individual actions. It demands a societal shift, a collective refocusing on shared values and responsibilities. This requires:

Family Reengagement: Rebuilding the family unit as a source of support and care for elders, fostering intergenerational

dialogue and understanding.

Community Initiatives: Establishing strong community networks that offer companionship, practical assistance, and social inclusion opportunities for senior citizens.

Policy Advocacy: Lobbying for policy changes that prioritize access to healthcare, financial security, and age-friendly infrastructure.

Media Representation: Challenging negative stereotypes and showcasing positive narratives of aging to foster respect and appreciation for senior citizens.

Educational Programs: Integrating gerontology education into school curriculums to cultivate empathy, respect, and awareness of aging issues from a young age.

A Legacy of Compassion: Investing in the Future:

By honouring our commitment to older adults, we invest not only in their well-being but also in the future of our society. Caring for our elders today ensures a legacy of compassion and solidarity that future generations can inherit and pass on. Ultimately, protecting and supporting our senior citizens is not just an act of kindness; it's an act of self-preservation, safeguarding the very values that bind us together and define our humanity.

Moving Beyond Words: Practical Steps for Action:

Turning words into action requires tangible steps:

Volunteer your time: Offer your skills and companionship to local senior centers, adult day care programs, or home-based care initiatives.

Advocate for policy changes: Support organizations working on elder rights and lobby your elected officials for improved care policies.

Challenge ageism: Speak out against negative stereotypes and prejudices towards older adults, both in conversations and public spaces.

Connect with your elders: Spend time with your own grandparents, parents, or senior neighbors, offering emotional support and fostering intergenerational bonds.

Support caregiver resources: Donate to organizations offering support services for family caregivers or volunteer your time to provide respite care.

Every small act of care and compassion ripples outwards, shaping a more inclusive and humane society for all ages. Let us remember that respecting and supporting our elders is not just a responsibility; it's an opportunity to reclaim our shared humanity and build a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come.

It delves deeper into the moral imperative of caring for senior citizens, highlighting the need for societal introspection and a collective effort to uphold their dignity and well-being. It offers practical steps that individuals can take to contribute to this cause and emphasizes the enduring value of compassion and intergenerational solidarity.

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