
ABUSE TOWARDS ELDERLY PARENTS BY ADULT CHILDREN: A SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS FROM BANGLADESH SOCIETY

Rasel HUSSAIN¹

Anisur Rahman KHAN²

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35782/JCPP.2025.4.01>

Abstract: *With the advent of social transformation from traditional to modern to neoliberal, social norms, values, kinship ties, and family bonding are getting weaker. Increasing abuse and negligence towards parents bear testimony to a changing social milieu where elderly parents are often being victimized by their children. Although religion and cultural norms dominate Bangladeshi society to some extent, analogous patterns of abuse toward parents are also rampant and there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the problem in Bangladesh. As such, this research attempts to explore the trends, nature, causes, and aftermath of elderly parental abuse in Bangladesh. Using a content analysis strategy, it captures news of elderly parental abuse published in online newspaper portals in Bangladesh. Twenty cases were identified and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Abuses are mostly concentrated in the Dhaka division, fathers are the most common victims, and sons are the common perpetrators. Physical harm, parricide, and delayed burial are the most grievous forms of abuse. Property and wealth issue are the most triggering factors of abuse towards parents. Considering the grievous nature of the abuse, formal agencies and local people intervened in the incidents. Several measures are suggested to save and support the elderly, including properly implementing relevant policies. The results of the analysis may be used for future policy directions not only in Bangladesh but also in many South Asian societies.*

Keywords: *Abuse, Elderly Parents, Adult Children, Bangladesh.*

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, raseldu1971@ewubd.edu (Corresponding Author)

² Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, arkhan@ewubd.edu

Introduction and Background of the Research

Elder abuse is not a new phenomenon; it has existed for centuries across cultures and societal structures, even in communities that traditionally uphold reverence, respect and care for older adults (Shankardass, 2020a). Such abuse is now globally recognized as a serious problem requiring urgent interventions by the health care systems, social welfare agencies, policymakers and the general public (Pillemer et al. 2016). The term elder abuse is generally used to describe certain types of harm to older adults and is commonly referred to as ‘elder mistreatment,’ ‘senior abuse,’ ‘abuse in later life,’ ‘abuse of older adults,’ ‘abuse of older women,’ and ‘abuse of older men’ (Sharma, 2012). It is precisely conceptualized as misbehavior towards the elderly by people whom they trust most or who are in a position or have the power to care for the elderly (Gholipour, Khalili & Abasian, 2020). However elderly abuse is a particularly complex issue and seemingly more multifarious and complicated than many other types of abuse as it takes on many varieties (Mikton et al. 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.) broadly defines elder (aged 60 years and older) 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. This type of violence constitutes a violation of human rights and includes physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse; financial and material exploitation; abandonment; neglect; and significant loss of dignity and respect.” It is estimated that one in six older persons is subjected to some form of abuse worldwide each year. Abuse of elder persons can bring dire consequences in matters of health and well-being including death, serious physical and mental health problems, financial and resource problems and social dislocations (Mikton et al. 2022). Abuse towards the elderly can happen anywhere including in the community, the home of the elderly, the home of a family member, in an assisted living facility, or at a caring home. The perpetrator may include family members, strangers, health care providers, caregivers, or friends (National Institute on Aging, 2023). However, one of the most critical forms of elder abuse is ‘parental abuse’ within family settings. Abuse by adult children is particularly problematic in situations where caregiving for parents is involved (Schiamberg & Gans, 1999). In matters of abuse towards elderly parents, it is their adult children who are the most common perpetrators (Klun, Bučar Ručman, & Frangež, 2024). Unfortunately, people often overlook the abuse of (elderly) parents by their adult children

and put in place more emphasis on other categories of family violence such as child abuse and wife abuse (Daskalopoulos & Borrelli, 2006).

The definition of elderly varies on various grounds. In the context of Bangladesh, people who are 60 years old and above are usually considered the elderly. It is a period when the elderly become physically and financially weak (Karim, 2021). In Bangladesh, elder abuse and neglect have become increasingly common, transitioning from isolated instances of family violence to recognized violations of human and civil rights as well as a serious public health concern (Farid, 2017; Begum, 2020). The country is also experiencing rapid growth in its elderly population due to declining birth and infant mortality rates and increasing life expectancy. Between 2000 and 2030, the elderly population in Bangladesh is projected to grow by more than 200%, with approximately 17 million citizens over the age of 60 by 2030. Currently, over 15 million people in Bangladesh are aged 60 or older, and this figure is expected to rise to about 36 million, constituting 22% of the total population by 2050 (Hossain, 2022; Karim, 2020; Rahman, 2020; Khan, 2015a; Taher, 2015).

Despite this demographic shift, elderly individuals in Bangladesh are increasingly losing their traditional social status, respect and influence. Changes to social institutions driven by modernization and urbanization have significantly altered the positionality of the elderly (Islam, 2015). Historically, older adults held esteemed positions within extended families, commanding respect from all family members. However, the rise of nuclear families and the decline of joint family systems in the neoliberal system have marginalized and isolated the elderly. Today, they face greater health challenges, financial instability, and social neglect compared to younger populations. Alarming, there has been a significant rise in elder abuse and neglect across Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2019; Taher, 2015; Khan, 2015a; Hussain, 2024). Even though, there is a lack of empirical studies and statistical evidence on elderly abuse perpetrated by adult children in Bangladesh (Begum, 2020). Available sources confirm that the elderly in Bangladesh confront various psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuses. Abuse towards the elderly also includes neglect and other forms of exploitation and maltreatment. Abuse and neglect of the elderly in Bangladesh is no longer an isolated family violence, but rather a human and civil rights violation and a serious public health concern that inflicts them disproportionately (Khan, 2003; Farid, 2017; Begum, 2020).

Elder abuse by adult children represents a hidden form of domestic abuse in Bangladesh. Many children fail to fulfill their moral obligations to care for their aged parents, often perceiving them as a burden, especially when they cannot contribute financially to the household (Karim, 2021). Children, preoccupied with their own lives and families, frequently prioritize personal interests over caring for their parents (Hussain, 2024). Elderly parental abuse remains a largely hidden issue in Bangladesh due to a lot of stigmas associated with the event (Begum, 2020). Elderly parents tend not to disclose their experience of abuse by their children as they fear that if they voice any abuses or negligence, society will stigmatize and degrade them (Hussain, 2024).

Abuse of elderly parents demands urgent social, legal and policy interventions to address and mitigate its effects. Recognizing the insidious nature of this problem and the paucity of scholarly evidence, this analysis aims to explore the dynamics of elderly abuse by adult children through newspaper content analysis in Bangladesh. Since there is no integrated mechanism to officially collect and store data about the abuse of the elderly, newspaper reports may be regarded as a vital source of information. It is hoped that findings as such will inform relevant policy measures to save the elderly from the abuse of their children.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are framed as follows:

- a) To capture a general demographic overview of elderly parental abuse by their adult children in Bangladesh;
- b) To explain types, causes and aftermaths of elderly parental abuse by their adult children in Bangladesh;
- c) To suggest some specific policy directions to reduce elderly parental abuse.

Methodology

Elderly parental abuse is considered a private issue in Bangladesh. So, incidences of such abuse hardly come to light. Only the extreme cases of abuse get reported by the newspapers. For this study, we did an online

newspaper portal search using Google Search for the period between 2021 and 2023 to explore the nature, causes, and aftermath of elderly parental abuse. During this period, we identified 20 cases of elderly parental abuse by their elder children and analyzed them in line with the objectives of the study. Although different other forms of elderly abuse were noted on the news portals, we were selective to include abuse that was directed towards elderly parents only. Categorically, we selected cases of abuse directed to parents who are above 60 years and older. The search was conducted in January 2024. Our search was mostly limited to “parent abuse in Bangladesh,” “adult children-to-parent abuse in Bangladesh,” parents abused by their adult children in Bangladesh, “adult children-to-mother abuse in Bangladesh,” “adult children-to-father abuse in Bangladesh.” We included topics from both Bangla and English newspaper portals. While reporting, data were presented through percentage distribution under several broad categories. Several case examples were also reproduced to contextualize the data. Hence, our analysis follows both quantitative and qualitative aspects of social science research. Where appropriate, findings were corroborated with the existing relevant literature from both Bangladesh and beyond. As content analysis and information were available publicly, no formal ethical approval was required from any authority.

Findings

4.1 Geographical location of the Abuse

Administratively, Bangladesh is divided into divisions, districts, and sub-districts. Currently, there are 8 divisions and 64 districts. Each division comprises several districts and subdistricts. Through analyzing the cases, it has been noted that most abuse was concentrated (40%, $n=8$) in the Dhaka division followed by the Chittagong division (30%, $n=6$). Barishal, Khulna and Mymensingh divisions had the lowest concentration (5%, 1 each) of elderly parental abuse during this time. Table 1 represents the geographical concentration of elderly prenatal abuse.

The following table provides information regarding district-level concentration of elderly abuse. It is found that among the 20 cases, most cases of abuse took place in Dhaka district (20%, $n=4$), followed by Narayanganj (10%, $n=2$), Chittagong (10%, $n=2$), and Laxipur (10%, $n=2$), districts.

Table 1: Geographical location of the abuse (by division)

Division wise abuse	Number (Percentage)
Dhaka Division	08 (40%)
Chittagong Division	06(30%)
Rangpur Division	03(15%)
Barisal Division	01(5%)
Khulna Division	01(5%)
Mymensingh Division	01(5%)
Total	20 (100%)

Table 2: Geographical location of the abuse (by district)

District wise abuse	Number (Percentage)
Dhaka	04 (20%)
Narayanganj	02 (10%)
Chittagong	02 (10%)
Laxipur	02 (10%)
Chandpur	01(5%)
Feni	01(5%)
Thakurgaon	01(5%)
Dinajpur	01(5%)
Kustia	01(5%)
Barisal	01(5%)
Rajbari	01(5%)
Gazipur	01(5%)
Bagerhat	01(5%)
Mymensingh	01(5%)
Total	20 (100%)

4.2 Gender Dimensions of Victims and Perpetrators

Most victims are fathers (50%, n=10), followed by mothers (30%, n=6) and parents together (20, n=20%). On the other hand, sons appeared to perpetrate abuse to their parents mostly (65%, n=13), followed by both sons and daughters (30%, n=6). Separately, daughters are the least perpetrators of such abuse (5%, n=1). Table 3 captures information on the categories of victims and perpetrators.

4.3 Types of elderly parental abuse

Since the most insidious nature of violence was only published in the newspapers, it was possible to categorize the type of abuse broadly. In this case, types of abuse were categorized as serious physical assault, murder and delayed burial. Amongst all the identified cases, 40% (n=8) of elderly parents were murdered by their adult children, followed by experience of

serious physical assault (30%, n=6) and delayed burial (30%, n=6). Table 4 in the following presents different categories of abuse towards elderly parents.

Table 3: Gender dimensions of parental abuse

Victims	Number (Percent-age)	Perpetrators	Number (Percent-age)
Fathers	10 (50%)	Son/s	13 (65%)
Mothers	06 (30%)	Daughter/s	01 (5%)
Parents	04 (20%)	Both son(s) and daughter(s)	06 (30%)
Total	20 (100%)	Total	20 (100%)

Table 4: Types of abuse

Types of abuse	Number (Percentage)
Serious physical assault	06 (30%)
Murder	08 (40%)
Delay the burial (abuse to deceased parents)	06 (30%)
Total	20 (100%)

In addition, relevant cases are summarized in the following on three categories of abuse mentioned above.

Case 1: Serious physical assault for money

Jaynal Abedin and Honufa Begum, an elderly couple from Dhaka City were pushed out by their three sons. Despite all his sons being solvent businessmen, they used to torture their parents for money. Once the couple drove out of home, they had to rent an apartment. Meanwhile, on 28 July 2022, Jaynal sold a piece of land for Tk 31 lakh to meet daily expenses and was returning home on a motorcycle with his son-in-law with the proceeds. It is alleged that his three children collaborated with several muggers, assaulted Jaynal with an iron rod and snatched the money. Jaynal fell off the motorcycle after being hit by his sons and got serious knee and wrist injuries. On his hand, six stitches were required. A team of detectives from Dhaka Metropolitan Police detained his sons from different parts of the country and recovered Tk 31 lakh from them. Jaynal reported the incident to the Police Station, and an investigation was launched. (Source: Star Digital Report, The Daily Star, Date: 14 August 2022)

Case 2: Making delay in burial of mother

After the death of Taraful Begum, wife of late Shahjahan, due to old age complications, her children kept the body in the yard and started quarrelling over the division of the property. They prevented the burial of the body until the property was settled. Locals informed that Shahjahan was the owner of land for 9 decimals. He died before dividing the property. Following the death of Shahjahan, Taraful was living a non-human life. The boys did not keep track of Taraful. As a result, Taraful took refuge in the house of her only daughter. At one stage, Taraful registered 4 decimals (out of her 9 decimals) of land to her daughter's name. But the boys never agreed to the decision. Finally, they obstructed the burial of the dead, demanding equal distribution of the land. Faizuddin Ahmed Kalu, a concerned local government representative intervened in the matter and assured the disputants to solve it. Following that, the body was buried at night after 9 hours of death. (Source: Bartha24, Date: 15 February 2022)

Case 3: Not a robbery, but a murder plotted by the son

Abdul Halim, an elderly from Narayanganj, was killed on purpose by his son on 1st February 2023 who then tried to trick the police by setting up the crime scene to look like a robbery. Halim's body was found in his home by the police. Masud, the son of the dead, said that thieves broke in, tied him up, killed his father, and took all the money and jewelry before leaving. The police found the place ransacked, but there were no signs of someone breaking in. Later on, it was found out that Masud had hired a killer, Rubel, and that he and Rubel strangled Halim in his sleep, stole money from the cupboard, and ransacked the room. However, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) solved the murder mystery. "Masud planned the murder so that he could steal the Tk 30 lakh that his father recently took out of the bank," the Police Bureau of Investigation official said Masud paid Rubel Tk 5 lakh to help him kill his father at his home. As part of his plan, Masud left the building's gate and the door to his apartment open on the night of January 31. Rubel walked into the house around 10 p.m. When Halim fell asleep around 11 p.m., the two of them went into his room. Masud used a mosquito net to hold his father down while Rubel started to strangle Halim. Halim was screaming for help, but Rubel put a pillow over his face to stop him. Masud checked his father's pulse later to make sure he was dead. (Source: The Daily Star, Date: 13 February 2023)

4.4 Causes of abuse of the elderly

Several reasons were identified for causing elderly abuse in Bangladesh. Dispute over wealth/property stood as the most heightened cause of elderly parental abuse (60, n=12), followed by mental disorders/drug addiction of adult children (20%, n=4). In this case, mentally disturbed or addicted children got involved in a dispute with their elderly parents that eventually caused abuse towards their parents. Considering parents as a burden was also a significant cause of abuse towards parents (10%, n=2). Table 5 captures information regarding various reasons for elderly abuse.

Table 5: Reasons of parental abuse by children

Reasons of abuse and negligence	Number (Percentage)
Dispute over wealth, money and property issue	12 (60%)
Disputes over father pension money	01 (5%)
Considered parents as a burden	02 (10%)
Mental disorders/Drug addiction of perpetrators	04 (20%)
Other family disputes/crisis	01 (5%)
Total	20 (100%)

In addition, relevant cases are summerized in the following to highlight the causes of abuse.

Case 4: Mentally disordered son kills mother

Monowara Begum from Chandpur was stabbed to death by her son Momin Dewan, 42. Three months ago, he got out of jail on bail and beat his mother and niece, as well as giving them death threats. On that day, he reportedly stabbed his mother with a sharp knife and ran away from home. He was captured by locals and handed over to police. Police and locals said Momin suffers from mental disorders and he had been in jail for years in another murder case. (Source: Dhaka Tribune, Date: 27 October 2021)

Case 5: Drug addict son kills mother for money

Ayesha Begum, from Narayanganj district and the wife of Rafik Mia, was murdered by her drug-addict son Sojib. Anjuman Ara, Ayesha Begum's daughter, revealed that her brother was a drug addict who regularly harassed her mother when he could not acquire money as demanded.

According to Anjuman, his brother Sojib begged his mother for money early Monday morning, and when she refused, he stabbed her to death with a sharp weapon. The Police are seeking to catch Sojib for the murder of his mother. (Source: Bangladesh Post, Date: 7 November 2022)

4.5 Aftermath (solution/support) of abuse

Several pieces of information were availed concerning the impact and aftermath of abuse. In most cases, attempts were made to settle disputes between parents and elderly children through the intervention of different formal and informal agencies such as the Police, local government bodies, local people (45%, n=10). In several cases, when formal complaints were filed in the court or police, the perpetrators were either arrested or looked for arrest by the Police (41%, n=9). In a few cases (9%, n=2) where nothing worked out, the elderly had to be shifted to the old age home. Only one incident was found where the perpetrators begged forgiveness from parents due to their mistreatment. Table 6 in the following captures information regarding the impact and aftermath of elderly abuse.

Table 6: Aftermath (solution/institutional support) of parental abuse

Aftermath (solution/institutional support)	Number (Percentage)
Shifted to an old home and hospital	02 (9%)
Offenders got arrested/looking for arrest by the Police	09 (41%)
Attempts for dispute resolution through intervention of Police/local government/local people	10 (45%)
Offenders seek forgiveness from parents	01 (5%)
Total	20 (100%)

In addition, two relevant cases are summarized in the following to highlight the aftermath of abuse.

Case 6: The elderly couple has now been admitted to the hospital

Old man Amer Ali and his wife Zarina Khatun from Gangni subdistrict of Meherpur district became homeless when their sons pushed them out of their home. So, two elderly parents were admitted to the hospital. Old Amer Ali says, sadly, *“How hard I have raised them. After giving all the land in the name of four sons, we are now in the hospital bed. They snatched the plate of rice*

from the face of the old woman and threw it in front of the dog. However, today they kicked us out of the house. I got sick and was admitted to the hospital. Not even once did anyone find out about us". Amer Ali, transferred his properties to his four sons—Hekmat, Abdul, Khezmat, and Achmat—under the condition they pay him BDT 4,000 Taka monthly for his and his wife Zarina's maintenance. The sons stopped payments after the first month, and the couple alleges they also took BDT 4 lakhs from a land sale but did not return it. To protect their remaining 13 khatas of land, Amer transferred it to Zarina, but the sons wanted this land as well. The parents claim they were mistreated and eventually kicked out of the house. Despite multiple community meetings, the issue remains unresolved. (Source: banglanews24.com, 19 January 2022).

Case 7: The son abandoned his mother and told her not to come back again: Settled in old age home

A very old lady, Shakila Begum, was abandoned by her son. The son and his wife handed over a cloth bag and forcibly boarded her on a bus. At that time, he said, "Don't come back home. Go where the eyes go." The old mother asked her son for his mobile number, but he did not give it to her. After being abandoned, she has been loitering here and there and sought help from door to door. Finally, the local government came to know about the incidents after seven days and took her to the hospital as she became so weak for staying in the streets. As the son refused to take her home, the local government authority sent her to a registered old age home for her care. (Source: Kaler Kantho. 23 July 2023)

Discussion

Since there is no exclusive or specific survey or content analysis on elderly parental abuse by their adult children in Bangladesh, findings cannot be directly comparable to the current state of knowledge. Yet, where appropriate, findings can be compared with studies highlighting any kind of elderly abuse both from Bangladesh and outside Bangladesh.

Our analysis captured information on abuse that takes place in the family or at the domestic and that son(s), daughter(s), and both son(s) and daughter(s) together perpetrate violence against their parents. Our findings are

also consistent with several empirical studies in Bangladesh which found elderly abuse is mostly perpetuated by family members such as spouses, sons, daughters, grandchildren and daughters-in-law (Farid, 2017; Awal, Majumder & Haque, 2020; Islam, 2015). The relationship with the perpetrator varies according to mistreatment type and culture. In Western culture, abuse of the elderly is mostly perpetrated by their spouse/partner, but in Asian culture, the most common perpetrators are children and children-in-law (Pillemer et al., 2016). For example, it was found in India that the most perpetrators are adult children, followed by daughters-in-law, spouses, sons-in-law, grandchildren, relatives, and others (Chokkanathan, & Lee, 2005). It is also consistent with another Bangladeshi study that reveals that dependence on male children is a prominent cause of abuse (Begum, 2020). On the other hand, we found that most victims are fathers of the perpetrators. There is no conclusive understanding in international literature regarding which gender is the most risk-prone to elder abuse. In some countries, elderly men are more likely than elderly women to experience elder abuse and in other countries, abuse is mostly directed towards elderly women (Pillemer et al., 2016). Since in Bangladesh men control property and resources, there is a likelihood for elderly fathers to become victims of abuse easily by their elder children on matters of property issues.

Taking care of the elderly in Bangladesh culture is not merely a social or moral duty by the family members including adult children, but also a significant religious duty. All major religious texts have placed immense obligations for appropriate caring of the elderly (Karim, 2020). Even though religion, culture, and social sanctions discourage elder abuse, degradation of moral and religious values, changing nature of family, social structure, and socio-economic status including modernization, economic pressure are strongly associated with maltreatment and abuse of older people in Bangladesh Begum, 2020; Farid, 2017; Khan, 2015b).

Many adult children fail to meet their moral responsibility of caring for their aged parents. They consider aged parents as a burden in their family, especially when the parents are unable to financially contribute and earn an income. Moreover, children are busy with their own, leaving their elderly parents susceptible to negligence and abuse (Karim, 2021).

With our limited data, with no rural and urban distinction, about geographical concentration of older abuse, any conclusive decision can be made

in terms of developing a correlation between elderly abuse and spatial location. From our data, we have identified the Dhaka division as the most pronounced geographical risk factor. It is further to note that no previous Bangladeshi study has ever highlighted this issue. But for a future reference study or survey in Bangladesh, geographical location may be taken up as a risk factor for analyzing elderly abuse. Elsewhere, it has been found that individuals living in urban areas were at greater risk for elder abuse. Country-specific prevalence of elderly abuse is also a triggering factor for such abuse. Amongst the European countries, Greece was found with an increased risk of sexual abuse while Portugal was associated with an increased risk of financial abuse (Pillemer et al., 2016).

Several past Bangladeshi studies have identified that different kinds and practices of abuse are directed toward the elderly such as physical abuse, financial exploitation, psychological/emotional abuse, verbal abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect, abandonment, and so on (Begum, 2020; Farid, 2017; Tareque et al., 2014). Being the newspaper sources, our analysis has explored only the crude nature of abuse such as murder, delaying burial and serious physical assault. The murder of parents is termed in criminological literature as parricide which is defined as the killing of one's mother, father, or both parents/close family members (Hillbrand, Alexandre, Young, & Spitz, 1999). It is such a rare crime or domestic abuse that gravely affects the sacred values of the family and makes society so uncomfortable and repulsive (Perri, Lichtenwald & MacKenzie, 2008). It signifies the most extreme dysfunctional aspects of family relationships that typically exist between the perpetrator and the parent (Brown, Eckberg, Deborah & Dodson, 2017). One of the heinous forms of abuse is the attempt by adult children to delay the process of burial of their deceased parents. Such abuse seems to be very unique to the context of Bangladesh which used to take place due to disputes over property, family conflicts, legal complications, and religious and cultural issues surrounding inheritance and property rights. No study in Bangladesh has yet captured the nature of this form of shameful abuse in Bangladesh. The country where Islam is the dominant religious faith with more than 90% of its population being Muslims. It is generally preferable in Islam that the dead be buried as soon as possible (Sheikh, 1998). Preventing the deceased from being buried peacefully is a serious expression of human indignity since when people die, there is no longer any reason for animosity or hostility towards them (ICRC, 2020).

Not a single cause can instigate elderly abuse. In the context of Bangladesh, Rahman (2010) noted that a combination of personal, familial, and economic factors results in elder abuse. Our brief analysis also found several factors leading to elderly abuse. However, the dispute over property or wealth appears to be the most instigating factor for elderly abuse. Property dispute at the household level is a widespread phenomenon in many cultures including Bangladesh (Rahman & Hossain, 2020). In a resource-scarce country like Bangladesh, property, land, or inheritance issues trigger violence among family members randomly. A study conducted by Amjad (2020) in Dhaka city found that forcible capture of land and stealing money from the elderly are the critical triggering factors for abuse. Another study conducted in Rajshahi district by Hossain, Haque & Ullah (2022) found that most elderly persons have the right to property in several ways. Children and in-laws apply coercive techniques to take away their property. Our study also noted that mental disorders and drug addiction of the perpetrators as serious risk factors for elderly abuse. Similar to our findings, research from most advanced nations found that most family members who are the perpetrators of elderly abuse are reportedly substance users having problems with their mental health and are also often socially isolated (Teaster & Roberto, 2022). In India, studies reveal that mental health/behavioral problems and drug addiction of the perpetrators are also related to elder abuse (Shankardass, 2020b).

In matters of assessing the aftermath of abuse, it has been noted that in most cases formal/informal mechanisms have intervened in the matters with their capacities. Parricide/murder, serious physical injury, and delayed burial deserve attention for the legal and social intervention of the appropriate authority because of the pressing nature and consequences of such abuses. However, it is broadly reported that in most cases abused parents do not feel comfortable reporting the abusive behavior of their children for several reasons. They fear legal and procedural matters, and become worried about further aggravation of the situation. Their dependence on children and love for them also restrict them not to seeking help or reporting abuse. Moreover, they are also concerned about privacy and intimacy norms of the family, compromising them to suffer the abuse silently (Schiamberg & Gangs, 2000). At the same, elder people might be unable to label the treatment or behavior they receive as abuse in any sense (Ecarnot, 2022). Further noted from our data that few elderly parents were shifted to old home or hospital. Moving the elderly to a care facility where

they can enjoy nice company and maintain an active lifestyle is often an alternative. But the reality is that Bangladesh has very few high-quality care facilities and trained caregivers. Thus, in the context of Bangladesh shifting the elderly to an old age home is not a good solution (Hossain, 2022). Moreover, these shelter homes in Bangladesh are not professionally or sensitively designed to meet the needs of the abused elderly. However, in the Western societal context, emergency shelter home programs have been introduced to support and protect older people who are victims of abuse. These specialized homes provide a safe environment as well as appropriate medical services (Heck, & Gillespie, 2013; Pillemer et al., 2016).

Recommendations: Ways to minimize abuse

As in other countries, older people in Bangladesh are thus a mixed bag: some require total help for their survival, while others have resources and varying capacities that might be utilized to ensure a respectable life for them at a low cost to society. Also, the standards for reliance differ for elderly males and females (Rahman, 2020). Adopting a model law like the Elder Justice Act 2010 of the USA may be an approach to moving forward with a commitment to support the elderly in Bangladesh (Taher, 2015).

Besides this, the government should pass the Protection of Rights of the Elderly Act and create a National Council of Elders to protect the elderly (Hussain, 2024), including a full commitment to implement the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (MIPAA). The most important law to protect the welfare of the elderly in Bangladesh is the "Maintenance of Parents Act-2013," which makes it legally required for children to provide for their parents' and grandparents' needs and take care of them. Because of various built-in flaws, the Act is not entirely successful. Also, there is not much awareness campaign for this Act (Ferdousi, 2020; Taher, 2015). Hence, the government of Bangladesh should revisit the legal and procedural aspects of the Act, make appropriate amendments, and push forward its rigorous implementation. If needed, the government may think of enacting a law specifically targeting abuse of the elderly both at home and outside.

The National Policy on Older People was passed in 2013. While being a good idea, the policy has not yet been fully implemented. The Ministry of Social Welfare prepared the Basis for the Development of Older Person

Act (Draft) in 2017. With the passage of the Foundation for the Development of Older Persons Act, the government intends to create the "Elders Development Foundation." These initiatives are expected to promote the growth of senior citizens (Ferdousi, 2020) if implemented appropriately.

A well-rounded and comprehensive care system should be developed to assist the elderly in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2022). Notwithstanding the numerous social stigmas, ethical quandaries, and feelings of guilt associated with old age homes, Bangladesh must have a good shelter home mechanism (Hussain, 2024, Jameel, 2022; Haider, 2022; Hossain, 2022, Khan, 2015a). Besides the old age home support system, one might choose to engage personal carers to care for their elderly parents at home as an alternative to care centers. As a result, services for paid home caregivers may be developed. Even if they are viewed as popular solutions, professional caregiving services are not yet fully available in our country (Jameel, 2022; Khan, 2015a).

No society can rely solely on public services to secure the security and welfare of the elderly; thus, community involvement is immensely required. The government of Bangladesh government must motivate the neighborhood, regional and local organizations to participate in services and caring for the elderly (Rahman, 2020). A linkage should be developed between government and nongovernment agencies to protect older people's rights and ensure their safety and security at home.

Overall, maintaining close connections with society, community, family, and support groups, and utilizing appropriate technology can serve as straightforward yet impactful strategies to safeguard the elderly from abuse (Sharma, 2021).

Conclusions

The parent-child relationship, perhaps, is the most important, valuable, and long-lasting interpersonal relationship. It is the ethical, moral, and sacred responsibility of children to love, respect, honor, and care for their parents. But it is a matter of serious social dismal and a sign of moral degradation when this celestial relationship is threatened and intimidated by various kinds of abuse perpetrated by (adult) children. Abuse of elderly parents by adult children is a kind of domestic/family violence. Bangladesh, as a society, still does not seem to be as proactive and serious in

dealing with or recognizing such abuse as it does for other types of family violence (e.g., child abuse, abuse of women in the family). For many elderly parents, it is a matter of shame and disgrace to share their experiences of abuse and seek formal and informal supports as well. This content analysis is the first-ever attempt to categorically highlight the dynamics of elderly parental abuse by their adult children in Bangladesh. Although this analysis is based on very few samples and not being able to generalize in the whole context of Bangladesh, it presents some grim realities of elderly abuse in Bangladesh. Elderly parental abuse is a complicated problem, particularly in a collective society like Bangladesh where respect for the senior members of the family is still nurtured and practiced. Any toxic and regressive treatment of elderly parents may impale not only the level of family bond-age and cohesion but may also degrade the moral foundation of the family and society as whole. Finally, lessons learned from this limited, yet important analysis may be a convenient source for academics and policy interventionists in Bangladesh.

Acknowledgements

N/A

Funding

The authors did not receive any funding for this study.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declare no conflicting interests.

References

- Ahmed, I. (2019, August 30). How can senior citizens complete the journey of life alone? The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/society/news/how-can-senior-citizens-complete-the-journey-life-alone-1792546>
- Amjad, K. (2020). Climate migrant elderly abuse and neglect: A study in slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh, *Journal of Aging Research and Healthcare*, 3(1): 1-38.

- Awal, M. R., Majumder, U. K., & Haque, M. M. (2020). Factors Associated with Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly Peoples of Chitmahal Areas in Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 8(1), 34–50.
<https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2020/v8i130213>
- Bangladesh Post (2022, November 7). Son kills mother in Narayanganj. *Bangladesh Post*. <https://bangladeshpost.net/posts/son-kills-mother-in-narayanganj-98584>
- Banglanews24 (2022, January 18). বৃদ্ধ দম্পতির এখন ঠাঁই মিলেছে হাসপাতালে. *banglanews24.com*. <https://www.banglanews24.com/national/news/bd/906664.details>
- Bartha24 (2022, February 15). মায়ের লাশ দাফনে ছেলেদের বাধা. *Bartha24.com*. <https://barta24.com/details/national/154155/obstruction-of-boys-in-burying-mother-body>
- Begum, F.A. (2020). Elder Abuse and Older Women's Vulnerability: A Growing Concern in Bangladesh. In: M. Shankardass, (eds) *International Handbook of Elder Abuse and Mistreatment*. Springer, Singapore.
- Babbie, E. (2007). *The practice of social research*. Belmont: Thomshon Wadsworth.
- Brown, J., Eckberg, D. A., & Dodson, K. D. (2017). Parricide: An Introduction for Clinical and Forensic Mental Health Professionals, *Forensic Scholars Today*, 3(2):1.
- BSS (2021, October 27). Woman stabbed to death in Chandpur, son arrested. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/318546/woman-stabbed-to-death-in-chandpur-son-arrested>
- Chokkanathan, S., & Lee, A. E. (2005). Elder mistreatment in urban India: A community-based study. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 17, 45–61. doi:10.1300/J084v17n02_03
- Daskalopoulos, M. D., & Borrelli, S. E. (2006). Definitions of elder abuse in an Italian sample. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 18(2–3), 67–85. https://doi.org/10.1300/j084v18n02_05
- Ecarnot, F. (2022). Do unto others: What we do about elder abuse will be our legacy. *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*, 3(8). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2666-7568\(22\)00153-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2666-7568(22)00153-2)
- Farid S. (2017). Elder abuse and neglect in Bangladesh: understanding issues, associated factors and consequences. *Fam Med Prim Care Rev*, 19(2): 123–127. <https://doi.org/10.5114/fmpcr.2017.67865>
- Ferdousi, N. (2020, October 27). Rights and Challenges of Older People in Bangladesh. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/rights-and-challenges-older-people-bangladesh-1984633>
- Gravetter, F. J., & Forzano, L. B. (2011). *Research methods for the behavioural sciences*. Belmont, CA: Wordsworth.

- Gholipour, F., Khalili, Z., & Abasian, M. (2020). Definitions and theories of elder abuse. *Elderly Health Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.18502/ehj.v6i2.5022>
- Haider, M. H. (2022, August 21). Would you put your elderly parents in a retirement home? *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/life-living/news/would-you-put-your-elderly-parents-retirement-home-3099876>
- Heck, L., & Gillespie, G. L. (2013). Interprofessional program to provide emergency sheltering to abused elders. *Advanced Emergency Nursing Journal*, 35, 170–181. doi:10.1097/TME.0b013e31828ecc06
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. London: Sage.
- Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research: A systematic review of empirical tests. *Social science & medicine* (1982), 292, 114523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>
- Hillbrand, M., Alexandre, J. W., Young, J. L., & Spitz, R. T. (1999). Parricides. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 4(2), 179–190. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789\(97\)00056-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789(97)00056-6)
- Hossain, A. K., Haque, A.K.M.M., & Ullah, S. M. A. (2022). The rights to marry, property and be free from torture: A study on the elderly of Rajshahi District in Bangladesh. *Khazanah Sosial*, 4(2), 253–261. <https://doi.org/10.15575/ks.v4i2.12252>
- Hossain, M. M. (2020, July 15). Better retirement homes a must for industrialised Bangladesh. *The Daily Star*. July 15, 2022. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/better-retirement-homes-must-industrialised-bangladesh-3070981>
- Hussain, R. (2024, July 17). Crisis and sufferings of elderly people is alarmingly in rise in Bangladeshi society. *The Daily Messenger*. <https://www.dailymessenger.net/opinions/news/24227>
- ICRC. (2020). *Management of the dead under Islamic law*. https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/document/file_list/4464_002_management_of_the_dead_under_islamic_law_lr.pdf
- Islam, M. S. (2015). Abuse and Neglect of the Elderly: Bangladesh Perspective, *Jagannath University Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(1-2), 20-31
- Joseph-Edwards, A., & Wallace, W. C. (2021). Suffering in silence, shame, seclusion, and invisibility: Men as victims of female perpetrated domestic violence in Trinidad and Tobago. *Journal of Family Issues*, 42(8), 1805-1830. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X20957047>
- Jameel, R. (2022, May 29). The responsibility of taking care ageing parents. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/shout/news/the-responsibility-taking-care-ageing-parents-3031761>
- Khan, A. R. (2003). The elderly and their problems in society: A sociological interpretation with special focus on Bangladesh perspectives, Bangladesh

- Journal of Administration and Management, 9: 57-84.
- Khan, A. R. (2015b). Who is old and when is a woman old? Cultural, social and economic meanings, *Thai Journal of Public Administration*, 13(2), 131-146.
- Karim, M. R. (2021). Protection of elderly parents in Bangladesh: an evaluation of relevant guidelines, *iiumlj*, 29 (s2): 221-248.
- Karim, M. A. (2020, April 29). Supporting elderly people during the pandemic. *The Daily Star*. April 29, 2020. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/supporting-elderly-people-during-the-pandemic-1897648>
- Khan, N, N. (2015, June 8). Everybody gets old. *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/102651/everybody-gets-old>
- Klun, M., Bučar Ručman, A., & Frangež, D. (2024). Violence Against Parents by Adult Children: A Systematic Literature Review of Empirical Studies. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241280955>
- Kaler Kantho (2023, July 23). The son abandoned Mother and told her not to come back again: Settled in old age home. *Kaler Kantho*. <https://www.kalerkantho.com/online/country-news/2023/07/23/1301518>
- Mikton, C., Campo-Tena, L., Yon, Y., Beaulieu, M., & Shawar, Y. R. (2022). Factors shaping the global political priority of addressing elder abuse: A qualitative policy analysis. *The Lancet Healthy Longevity*, 3(8). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2666-7568\(22\)00143-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2666-7568(22)00143-x)
- Morse, J. M. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(1), 3-5. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973200129118183>.
- Perri, F. S., Lichtenwald, T. G., & MacKenzie, P. (2008). The lull before the storm: Adult children who kill their parents. *Forensic Examiner*, 17, 40-54
- Pillemer, K., Burnes, D., Riffin, C., & Lachs, M. S. (2016). Elder Abuse: Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Prevention Strategies. *The Gerontologist*, 56 Suppl 2(Suppl 2), S194–S205. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnw004>
- Rahman, A. (2020, October 1). The increasing ‘burden’ of the elderly in Bangladesh: How we can change the narrative. *Th Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/the-increasing-burden-the-elderly-bangladesh-1970349>
- Rahman, A. & Hossain, R. (2020). The uncomfortable truth about land disputes in Bangladesh: Insights from a household survey, *Land Use Policy*, 95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2020.104557>
- Schiarnberg, L. B., & Gans, D. (1999). An Ecological Framework for Contextual Risk Factors in Elder Abuse by Adult Children. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 11(1), 79–103. https://doi.org/10.1300/J084v11n01_05

- Schiamberg, L. B., & Gans, D. (2000). Elder abuse by adult children: an applied ecological framework for understanding contextual risk factors and the intergenerational character of quality of life, *INT'L. J. AGING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, 50(4) 329–359.
- Shankardass, M.K. (2020a). Reflections on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment from Selected Countries and Regions: A Preamble. In: Shankardass, M. (eds) *International Handbook of Elder Abuse and Mistreatment*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8610-7_1
- Shankardass, M.K. (2020b). Perspectives on Elder Abuse and Mistreatment in India. In: Shankardass, M. (eds) *International Handbook of Elder Abuse and Mistreatment*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8610-7_1
- Sharma, B. (2012). Elderly abuse: An emerging public health problem. *Health prospect*, 11, 57-60.
- Sharma, R. (2021). Overview of Elder Abuse in Indian Context and Psychological Coping Mechanisms, *Journal of Gerontology & Geriatric Research*, 10(1): 532
- The Daily Star (2022, August 14). Brothers mugged Tk 31 lakh from father. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/brothers-mugged-tk-31-lakh-father-3094631>
- The Daily Star (2023, February 13). Freedom Fighter Killing: Not a robbery but murder plotted by son. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/freedom-fighter-killing-not-robbery-murder-plotted-son-3246101>
- Teaster, P.B., Roberto, K.A. (2022). Perpetrators of Elder Abuse. In: Geffner, R., White, J.W., Hamberger, L.K., Rosenbaum, A., Vaughan-Eden, V., Vith, V.I. (eds) *Handbook of Interpersonal Violence and Abuse Across the Lifespan*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89999-2_91
- The National Careline (nd.). Action on Elder abuse. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalcareline.org/AccessingHelp/ActionOnElderAbuse>
- Thiel, S. V. (2014). *Research methods in public administration and public management*. London: Routledge.
- Taher, M. A. (2015, April 7). Law Analysis: Elder Abuse-In Search of Legal Studies. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/elder-abuse-75919>
- US National Institute on Aging (2023). Elder abuse. Retrieved from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse/elder-abuse>

World Health Organization-WHO (2014, June 15). Abuse of older people. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>