

# **Are elderly in Indian families are safe? An exploratory study on elder abuse and neglect in Indian households**

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## **Abstract**

The responsibility of caring for elderly in India was traditionally done by the family members, particularly by sons. However, the coping capacities of the younger and the older generations are now being challenged in the context of gradual disintegration of joint families, the welfare and support for the aged has become a major issue. Given this context, the study tries to examine the abuse and neglect of elderly, based on a sample survey of 300 elderly living with families in Kerala State. To understand the nature and impact on abuse and neglect on elderly, a set of questions was canvassed and modified versions of Elderly Abuse Screening Test (EAST) and Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) were administered. Nearly half of the elderly experienced some form of abuse or neglect. Verbal abuse (38 percent) and neglect (37 percent) were the most common forms of mistreatment, followed by physical abuse (13 percent) and material exploitation (10 percent). More than one-third of the elderly were under severe depression and nearly 27 percent were having mild depression. Major perpetrators of abuse as reported by elderly are sons, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Physical mobility and economic status of elderly to a large extent determine the severity and nature of abuse within the family. Study found that elderly females, especially widows, are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Abuse and neglect experienced within the family has significant effect on the psychological well-being of elderly.

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