

Age and Abuse: A Study of Elder Abuse and its Constituents

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Abstract: Even as cases of neglect and abandonment of elders in families soar, there is little awareness about the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) Act 2007 that gives powers of intervention and enforcement to revenue department officials in these cases. The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between the number of cases registered under the MWPSA Act 2007 and various census statistics using factor analysis. The study finds a significant relationship between elderly population of a district and number of cases registered. There also exists a significant positive relationship between per capita income and total number of cases registered which is a counter-intuitive result. It proves that there is a stronger significant relationship between households with 2 or more than 2 senior citizens and number of cases registered when compared to households with just 1 senior citizen.

Keywords: Elder Abuse, MWPSA Act.

I. INTRODUCTION

The MWPSA Act, 2007 gives powers to the government machinery to ensure welfare of elderly in families. As per the procedure, the senior citizens or parents have to first approach a Tehsildar with a complaint against their children. The Tehsildar tries to arrive at a compromise between the parties and if it seems impossible, the case is referred to the SDO. The Act gives powers to the SDO to even cancel a property deed which has taken place in the family and return the property to the senior citizen. A gift can be cancelled and if children are not willing to relinquish the property, SDO has the authority to use police force to ensure the property is handed over. Under the law, the SDO has the authority to order the children to give maintenance to parents.

However, Helpage India's report on elder abuse and crime in India (2011) reported that awareness about the act is very low especially among the elderly from lower socio-economic status. Age well foundation (2012) carried out a survey on elderly lonely and neglected revealed lack of awareness about the legal provisions. When asked about special legal provision and acts made for the welfare and empowerment of the older persons, only 12.55% elderly have accepted that they have heard of the MWPSA act.

In India, Verbal abuse is the most commonly reported abuse faced by the elderly from lower socio economic strata while it was neglect reported by the elderly from higher socio economic strata. Taking all these statistics into account, the research aims to find whether a correlation exists between the number of elder abuse cases reported and factors such as population and per capita income.

II. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ELDER ABUSE

The definition developed by Action on Elder Abuse in the United Kingdom and adopted by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse states that: 'Elder Abuse is 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'. In general, elder abuse is a term referring to any knowing, intentional, or negligent act by a caregiver or any other person that causes harm or a serious risk of harm to a vulnerable adult.

The most common form of abuse is financial exploitation, with physical abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse following. Financial exploitation is a fast-growing form of abuse of seniors and adults with disabilities. Situations of financial exploitation commonly involve trusted persons in the life of the vulnerable adult, such as: caretakers and family members.

The personal losses associated with abuse can be devastating and include the loss of independence, homes, life savings, health, dignity, and security. Victims of abuse have been shown to have shorter expectancies than non-abused older people.

Three fifth (60%) of the elderly consider verbal abuse as elder abuse while more than two fifth (48%) feel physical abuse constitutes elder abuse. More than one third each of the elderly feel that elder abuse constitutes emotional abuse (37%), showing disrespect (36%) and economic abuse (35%).

In case of emotional abuse, mental torture was reported the most with Mumbai recording the highest (84%). 'Speaking in loud voice' is the highest percentage of abuse in case of verbal abuse.

Hence, the definition of elder abuse is not consistent. In our research, we define elder abuse as "an occurrence when any person under circumstances is likely to produce great bodily harm or death, or wilfully causes unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering, or wilfully causes or permits the person or health of the elder or dependent adult to be injured."

III. STUDY DETAILS

The study uses data from the census of 2011 and is based completely on the cases registered in Kerala. An RTI was filed to find out the number of cases registered and solved for various districts of Kerala.

Data from 14 districts is used for the research. All data is used from the year 2011 and the cases registered are from 2011-2016. Elder person is defined as citizens above 60 years of age. The alpha value used was 0.05.

Table I. (a) District wise no. of cases registered and factors - (i)total population (ii)elder population (iii)rural population

Name of the district	Number of cases registered	Total population	Elder population	Rural population
Thiruvanthapuram	1705	3307284	429431	1529831
Kollam	617	2629703	350012	1448217
Pathanamthitta	890	1195537	213383	1065799
Alapuzha	414	2121943	322246	979643
Kottayam	586	1979394	312089	1409158
Idukki	170	1107453	128559	1056929
Ernakulam	1388	3279860	450794	1048025
Thrissur	592	3110327	428595	1024794
Palakkad	353	2810892	333511	2133124
Malappuram	228	4110956	341779	2295709
Kozhikode	212	3099543	360880	1013721
Kasargod	192	1302600	127814	798328
Kannur	694	2525637	316238	882017

Table I. (b) District wise no. of cases registered and factors- (iv) per capita income (v) households with one senior citizen (vi) households with two senior citizens (vii) households with three senior citizens

Name of the district	Number of cases registered	Per capita income	Households with 1 senior	Households with 2 seniors	Households with more than 2 seniors
Thiruvanthapuram	1705	64365	240905	87642	3899
Kollam	617	54720	196243	71753	2914
Pathanamthitta	890	65721	101979	51474	2470
Alapuzha	414	59087	171630	69730	3295
Kottayam	586	67376	142102	76389	3890
Idukki	170	58150	65423	29388	957
Ernakulam	1388	86572	227384	102417	4407
Thrissur	592	62841	234592	88359	4241
Palakkad	353	54410	196498	63281	3102
Malappuram	228	37985	215839	59506	1132
Kozhikode	212	56817	215087	67639	3090
Kasargod	192	49309	81068	212708	965
Kannur	694	58003	183686	60049	3588

The concept of Pearson Coefficient was used to calculate the correlation between two variables. It is a statistical method which is used to measure the linear correlation between two variables X and Y, giving a value between +1 and -1, where +1 is total positive correlation, 0 is no correlation and -1 is negative correlation. Correlation is any broad class of statistical relationships involving dependence, usually a linear dependence between two variables. It is a simple and straightforward of determining whether or not two variables are related and if at all they influence each other. At this point, it should be clear that correlation is really different from cause – effect and will in general, not imply cause – effect.

From the prevalent research on elder abuse and our own observations, we formulated the following hypotheses:

(As a part of this three primary factors were taken into consideration – population, per capita income and number of households with senior citizens. These primary factors are later classified to sub-factors for study purpose.)

(The first three hypothesis are based on the population of the district. These factors were considered to verify the general conception of ‘Greater the population, greater the number of cases.’)

H1: There is a significant relationship between total population of district and number of cases registered.

H2: There is a significant relationship between elderly population of district and number of cases registered.

H3: There is significant relationship between rural population of district and number of cases registered.

(The next hypothesis considers per capita income of district to study how the status of livelihood affects the number of cases reported.)

H4: There is significant relationship between per capita income of district and number of cases registered.

(The next three hypothesis are on the number of households with senior citizens to study how the family size and status effect the number of cases registered.)

H5: There is significant relationship between number of households with 1 senior citizen and number of cases registered.

H6: There is significant relationship between number of households with 2 senior citizens and number of cases registered.

H7: There is significant relationship between number of household with more than 2 senior citizens and number of cases registered.

IV. RESULTS

We performed a Pearson Correlation Test, commonly known as t-test (paired two sample for means) and found out the Pearson Correlation Coefficient for each hypothesis.

Table II. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and total population of district

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	2505470.692
Variance	222240.2692	8.48118E+11
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.266196729	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H1 is 0.27 indicating a weak positive relationship, which implies that the population of the place has a lesser significant effect on the number of cases filed. The hypothesis explains the large number cases registered in high population districts like Trivandrum and Ernakulum.

Table III. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and elder population of district

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	316563.9
Variance	222240.2692	1.07E+10
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.556361431	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H2 is 0.56 indicating a moderately positive relationship, which implies that there is a dependence on the elder population on the number of cases filed. This hypothesis is also supported by the fact that highest number cases were registered in districts like Ernakulam and Trivandrum which have very high elder population.

Table IV. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and rural population of district

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	1283484.231
Variance	222240.2692	2.19402E+11
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	-0.053192082	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H3 is -0.05 indicating no relationship which means that there exists no dependence of the rural population on the number of cases filed. Districts like Malappuram and Palakkad having very high rural population have the least number of cases registered but Trivandrum which comes immediately next in rural population has the highest number of cases registered. Thus explaining that there exists no dependence between the two factors.

Table V. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and per capita income of district

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	59642.76923
Variance	222240.2692	124594308.4
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.684710731	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H4 is 0.68 indicating a strong positive relationship which means that the higher the per capita income is in a household, the more likely is the probability of that household of filing a report for elder abuse.

Table VI. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and number of household with 1 senior citizen

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	174802.769
Variance	222240.2692	3513163474
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.429904827	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H5 is 0.43 indicating a moderately positive relationship.

Table VII. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and number of household with 2 senior citizen

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	65333.4615
Variance	222240.2692	503712901
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.656441604	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H6 is 0.66 indicating a moderately positive relationship.

Table VIII. Pearson Correlation between no. of cases registered and number of household with more than 2 senior citizen

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	618.5384615	2919.23077
Variance	222240.2692	1464940.86
observations	13	13
pearson correlation	0.626253434	

The Person Correlation Coefficient for H7 is 0.63 indicating a moderately positive relationship.

The above three results indicate that there is a dependence of the filing of reports with the number of elderly in the households. Thus explaining the number of cases registered in districts like Pathanamthitta and Kollam.

V. CONCLUSIONS

We choose to accept H2, H4, H5, H6 and H7 and reject H1 and H3, because working with weak positive correlation and no correlation will not yield any tangible results and hence, we discard these results now itself.

Hence, we find out that there exists a significant relationship between elderly population of a district and the total number of cases registered which is an obvious result, because the higher the number of the elders in the population, the more will be the cases of elder abuse filed. The research also shows that there is no significant relationship between rural population of a district and the number of cases registered.

The study shows that there is a strong positive relationship between per capita income and the total number of cases registered. This result is non-intuitive and is different from the results of previous reports where it is stated that elder abuse is more prevalent in the lower economic strata. One should not conclude that a higher capita income results higher elder abuse. It simply means that more number of cases have been registered in districts with higher per capita income. One could also conclude that a typical elder person in a high income family would be in general, more aware than those in a lower income family which could be another factor to the positive correlation as the to file a report it important to know in the first place that such an act exists. There could be a higher rate of elder abuse in areas with lower per capita income, but due to factors such as lack of education and awareness, the actual number of cases that have been reported are less. The report of Helpage India (2011) which states that awareness is lower among the lower economic strata supports this claim.

The research finds that there exists a significant relationship between number of cases registered and number of households with 1 senior citizen as well as 2 senior citizens and more than 2 senior citizens. We note that the strength of the relationship is stronger when there are 2 or more senior citizens in a household. This result gives us insight into the differences in life when there is a single grandparent in a household versus when there are both grandparents. The study concludes that a single grandparent is often hesitant to file a complaint due to lack of support, which is quite often the case too.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study has taken place in Kerala and data of 13 districts is taken into account. We recommend that the future studies use the data of all states. It must be noted that litigation awareness is high in Kerala. There is lesser tangible data available for districts as compared to states. We suggest that future authors take into account division of households into various

economic strata and not just per capita income. Awareness of the act is a major factor that possibly shares a significant relationship with the number of cases registered. Due to constraints, we could not gather any primary data on awareness of the act within our state. However, it is possible to prepare a questionnaire and survey a sample population and it has been done by Helpage India for other states. It should be noted that Kerala only constitutes a small part of the total number of cases and the same results may not be generalized on a national level. The cases considered are cases registered under the MWPSA Act and does not take into account cases registered under other acts such as IPC.

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