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**Abuse suffered by selected elderly persons prior to
admission to an old age home**

BY

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degree of Master in Social Science in Probation and Correctional Practice
at the
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2002**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work and that It has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree at any University.

Signed by candidate

SIGNATURE

06 / 09 / 2002

DATE

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ABSTRACT

Elder abuse is one of the major problems in South Africa. Elderly people are being abused by their family members, children and members of their communities. This problem remains hidden in that most cases are not reported to the officials, and if they are reported, officials are doing little or nothing about them. Although the communities are trying to address the issue, due to under-reporting it is very difficult to determine the actual number of the elderly who are being abused daily.

Traditionally, the young generation is expected to respect their elderly people, whether they know them or not. However, nowadays it appears that little respect is shown to the elderly. Instead they are often being financially robbed, physically attacked, sexually abused and emotionally threatened. As a result they move to old age institutions or places of safety for safety and security.

This paper focuses on those elderly who suffered abuse in their families and communities. The study is conducted in an institution for the elderly. The abused elderly are encouraged to talk about what happened to them and who their abusers are, with the aim of finding out what brought them into an institution.

The findings of this research were obtained through focus group and in-depth individual interviews. Access to the institution was given at St. Monica's Home

and seven elderly persons, which is 50% of the residents, were interviewed. The same persons participated in both the in-depth individual and focus group interviews as a form of primary data collection. Information was elicited in the form of a focus group discussion and interviews with individuals.

The results of this paper indicate that:

- a) Family and community members are sometimes guilty of abusing the elderly.
- b) Elderly persons have lost trust in reporting their problems to officials, especially the police.
- c) The elderly prefer to be at the institution than to be at home, where they were abused by their 'loved' ones.
- d) Society has, to a large extent, lost traditional and cultural values in respect of caring for the elderly.
- e) There is a lack of knowledge among people regarding resources that could assist elderly people with their problems.

The research results show that there are elderly persons who move to institutions for the aged for safety and security, not because they prefer living there. However, one cannot generalize the findings of the study, as it covered only a small number of persons, and is, therefore, not representative of the elderly in general. The study focused on one institution with a limited population, as it had fourteen elderly people.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the abuse suffered by the elderly. It explores why the elderly, regardless of their race, experience such abuse that they have to leave their homes or communities for old age institutions. The researcher brings to this topic her African upbringing and background knowledge that traditionally, the younger generation should show respect to their elders and that an elderly person brings wisdom to the family. Black people, traditionally, believe that children and grandchildren should take care of their elderly parents and grandparents. Among the white population, it is culturally and socially accepted for white elders to be removed from their families and admitted to old age institutions for care. In black cultures, however, this is regarded as a mark of disrespect. It is perceived to be more common for blacks to be cared for within their family contexts than for their white counterparts. This does not rule out the fact that white elderly people are also abused in their homes. In fact, elder abuse can happen anywhere: there are no social, racial or class barriers. Consequently, the aim of this research was to explore the influence of both culture and the racial categories in as far as abuse of the elderly is concerned. However, no claim is made to provide an exhaustive perspective, but merely to gain some insight into the problem of elder abuse.

Another reason why the researcher decided to examine abuse of the elderly is the fact that she grew up in a community where abuse was not spoken about,

especially with regard to the elderly. As a youngster in the community, and witnessing elderly people being abused emotionally, physically and materially, the researcher felt helpless and powerless to assist in stopping this abuse. It is as a result of these personal experiences and because she now has an opportunity to understand the situation both in the past and in the present that the researcher has chosen to explore this topic.

In recent times, it is not uncommon to hear about elderly individuals who are being abused by their families and/or community members. People read about these touching stories in magazines and newspapers and see it on television. They also hear about it from the communities and the elders themselves. More and more, people are talking about the issue but very little is actually done to stop or reduce it, largely because of fear – that society will stigmatize the affected families, or that family reputations will suffer. People are still experiencing shame, guilt and embarrassment when disclosing the abuse suffered by the elderly. The elderly themselves also keep quiet, fearing that disclosing the abuse could contribute to secondary victimization or further abuse. These are some of the consequences that are suffered by the abused and their families.

It is with these perceptions and experiences in mind that this paper focuses on the abuse suffered by the elderly, regardless of their social context. The main aim was to find out the elderly people's views and feelings regarding the abuse they experienced. It is also very important to understand the abusive situation from a social and historical perspective and to examine the ways in

which the abuse occurs, how and why it begins, and how both parties react psychologically to the abusive situation. To answer these questions in a broader manner, further research would be required. However, the prime motivation of the research was to find out why the elderly left their families and communities, in which they had grown up and in which their life memories were rooted, and why they, instead, moved into old age institution. Without a doubt most elderly people would prefer to be with their families until their death. However, in situations where elder abuse occurs, they feel compelled to leave their loved ones behind. From an African perspective, it is assumed that if an elderly person leaves his/her family for an old age home, there is something wrong in the family.

Having consulted some literature on the topic, the researcher noticed that most authors do not explain whether elder abuse actually leads the elders to places of safety. This is more common with child abuse where children are removed from their families to institutions of safety; much has been written about this topic. This statement supports what has been mentioned above; namely that thus far little intervention has occurred in as far as elder abuse is concerned. In South Africa, it is in fact very rare to find a place of safety for those elders who have suffered abuse from their families and/or their communities. Most of the residential old age institutions provide services either for ailing elders or for retired elders. Little attention is paid to the elderly who have experienced abuse.

This research also aimed to determine the elderly person's reaction to the abuse, the changes in his or her lifestyle and the protection they received at the old age institutions. Lastly it makes certain practical recommendations with regard to hopefully eradicating abuse in and by families and possibly re-uniting the abused elders, where appropriate, with their families.

The research was conducted at St. Monica's Home situated in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town. Information was gathered through a focus group interview and individual interviews with the same persons. The interviewees consisted of those elderly individuals who had moved to the institution after experiencing abuse by their family members and their communities. As mentioned above in the introductory paragraphs, the aim was to obtain information directly from the abused elders. It was assumed that they have much to tell, as they were actually the survivors of abuse, and that it would be better to hear from the abused themselves rather than from the witnesses. At the same time the interviews would provide them with an opportunity to ventilate their feelings about their experiences to someone willing to listen to them. It was also assumed that as interviewees came from varying cultural backgrounds, the question of a cultural perspective would be better explored. However, one should bear in mind that this is a mini research project; as a result the sample population was not representative enough to draw more general conclusions.

With regard to an overview of this research paper, Chapter Two is a review of some literature pertaining to elder abuse. However, most of the literature found was, unfortunately, overseas-based, and it was very difficult to find

South African literature. The research design and methodology adopted during the research interviews are discussed in Chapter Three. Thereafter, the research findings are presented and discussed in Chapter Four and, finally, Chapter Five concludes the study and makes certain practical recommendations with regard to overcoming the problem of elder abuse. Some recommendations are also made regarding the need for future research on the matter of elder abuse.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Elder Abuse

Elder abuse is a complex phenomenon. It comprises various categories of abuse, namely: sexual, emotional, physical and financial abuse. There is, however, no “uniform, comprehensive definition of the term” (Biggs, Phillipson & Kingston, 1995: 35). People have different views about what behaviours or activities in fact constitute abuse. Various researchers define it differently but generally share the same meanings. Some may also give their own meanings of the term, all of which may be valid, depending on how one understands the term ‘elder abuse’ (Pritchard, 1996).

The following definitions of elder abuse were extracted from various studies. Some authors use words such as “ill treatment”, “neglect”, “mistreatment” or “victimization” of older persons to describe the abuse suffered by elderly people. However for the purpose of this paper, the broad concept “abuse” will be used to avoid any confusion with the above-mentioned words.

Eastman (1984) in Mckendrick and Hoffmann (1990) defines elder abuse as “the systematic maltreatment, physical, emotional or financial of an elderly person by a care-giving relative” (302). However, this definition seems too limited, as it does not include abuse committed by non-care giving relatives.

Eckley in Mckendrick and Hoffmann (1990) also talks about elder neglect and elder victimization, defining it as a “deliberate or unintentional withholding of food and personal and medical care and the failure to provide adequate shelter and supervision”. Elder victimization also refers to “acts of crime such as assault, rape, robbery, purse snatching, theft, and house breaking” (303), to mention but a few. This definition by Eckley (in Mckendrick & Hoffmann, 1990) indicates elder neglect and victimization as other types of elder abuse.

Kosberg and Nahmiash in Baumhover and Beall (1996) on the other hand, define elder abuse as “an adverse act of omission or commission against an elderly” person (31), including the various forms of abuse mentioned above.

Other authors define elder abuse as “the wilful infliction of physical pain, mental anguish or deprivation by a caretaker of services which are necessary to the maintenance of mental and physical health” (O’Malley et. al. in Decalmer & Glendenning, 1997).

Although one could agree with all of the above selected definitions, for the purposes of this research the definition by Kosberg and Nahmiash was chosen. The reason for this is that it is a rather general definition, which does not imply that an abuser is necessarily a caregiver. Other definitions designate the caregiver as the abuser, ignoring the fact that other people could be abusers as well. One does not have to be a caregiver to abuse an elderly person. There are elderly individuals who are being abused by members of their community or by relatives who are not taking care of them.

The generally accepted meaning of elder abuse is the use of some degree of emotional, financial and physical force. Victims of elder abuse are often vulnerable. A victim may also experience more than one form of abuse and in some cases there may be more than one abuser involved (Pritchard, 1996). Elder abuse may be intentional, i.e. premeditated or deliberate, or unintentional, or the result of neglect. It may cause harm to the older person either temporarily or over a period of time (Pritchard, 1996). A person may be considered an abuser simply because of the way he or she acts or behaves towards an older person, or it may be because of a lack of education or understanding of how to deal with elderly persons.

2. The Extent of Elder Abuse

Although it may not be easy to gain a clear picture of the actual extent of elder abuse in their families and communities, the results are fairly obvious (Provincial Report, 2001). Elder abuse is a great problem in South Africa, and it happens to elders of every race, religion, culture, age and gender.

The abuse of elders is a widespread phenomenon that has only fairly recently been recognized in the media. Although it usually occurs in the context of the family, the community and the society as a whole does contribute to it. For instance, elderly individuals are being robbed of their money (Bryan, Lindgren & Joubert, 2001) and raped, both by known community members and by strangers, and nothing or little is done about it due to lack of information on relevant resources where such cases could be reported.

According to Bourlet (1990) most cases of elder abuse are under-recorded by officials. Moreover they are recorded under domestic abuse or physical crime related cases. For instance, if an elder person is physically assaulted the case is then recorded as a crime statistic, whereas if the abuser is a family member, it is recorded under domestic abuse cases. This makes it difficult to produce accurate statistical records (Provincial Report, 2001).

Another factor that makes it difficult to ascertain the actual extent of elder abuse is that most elder abuse cases are under-reported (Provincial Report, 2001). Most elders tend not to report their cases to officials, as they feel embarrassed to mention what has happened to them, or they may be afraid of provoking further abuse, such as being removed from their home or being starved by the abuser or by family members. Some may feel humiliated by the officials, as they experience secondary victimization when they do report their problems. As a result they lack trust towards officials, especially police officers (Bourlet, 1990; Glanz (1991) and Bryan et al., 2001).

Abuse against the elderly is frequently kept as a family secret. Further, elders are often reluctant to report the cases of abuse, they lack mobility and they thus alienate themselves (Provincial Report, 2001), which keeps them out of sight of members of the public and of professionals. It is consequently impossible to measure and assess the absolute number of cases that may be occurring in our communities as most elder abuse is hidden or unreported.

3. Effect of Abuse on Elderly People

Abuse affects many different aspects of the elderly individuals' lives. It affects their general functioning and often results in depression and 'silent' diseases, such as heart problems and high blood pressures. Some effects include a loss of self-esteem, an inability to relate to others, self-destructive behaviour patterns and many other behavioural problems (Baumhover & Beall, 1996).

Often, elderly people are looked after by their children and grandchildren. In addition, this care is frequently provided in the children's and grandchildren's house. In this set-up, when abuse takes place, they may be afraid to report or disclose the matter (Provincial Report, 2001). A number of factors apply in this situation. Firstly, an elderly person may be afraid to disclose what is happening, fearful that he or she will be removed from the so-called 'safe home' and become homeless. Secondly, s/he may be physically dependent on the family and afraid that disclosure may result in secondary abuse or in the arrest of the person s/he relies on, even if it is the perpetrator (Glanz, 1991).

Thirdly, s/he may fear bringing shame to the family as s/he may be concerned about the children's or grandchildren's reputation in the community and may fear that exposure may alienate the entire family from the community. As a result s/he may remain quiet and decide to let the abuse continue rather than putting an end to it (Decalmer & Glendenning, 1993).

Often the reactions to abuse vary. There may be feelings of denial. Or the elder may withdraw him/herself from activities, communication with the family members and participation in the family and social activities. One may accept such incidents as part of being an old person. On the other hand, s/he may seek attention or protection from various sources, such as social workers, police, strangers and others (Pritchard, 1996).

4. Forms of Abuse

Elder abuse occurs in many forms, for instance physical, emotional, sexual, financial and violation of elders' rights. All forms of abuse are not easy to cope with, as they leave emotional scars. The most common forms of abuse are financial and emotional, although the others occur too (Bryan et al., 2001).

The following categories of elder abuse are illustrated in the Halt Elder Abuse Line (HEAL) report, and will be discussed hereunder (Bryan et al., 2002). However various authors like Baumhover & Beall (1996), Mckendrick & Hoffmann (1990), Biggs, Phillipson & Kingston (1995), and others have determined similar forms of abuse.

4.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the infliction of physical harm, injury, physical coercion, and physical restraint (Biggs et al., 1995). This form of abuse involves kicking, punching, slapping, beating, even raping where it involves physical assault. Usually pain or injury and sometimes even death occur as a result of this type of abuse.

4.2 Emotional, verbal or psychological abuse

(This is the infliction of mental anguish. It may be in the form of words or actions, which are intended to humiliate, intimidate, confuse or frighten the victims. This involves shouting, ignoring and isolating. Verbal abuse involves threats or degrading language. Words such as “stupid”, “lazy”, “useless” are often used to degrade a person. This form of abuse occurs most frequently, particularly when an elderly person is vulnerable because of being too dependent or physically or mentally incapacitated (Pritchard, 1996).) Emotional abuse is difficult to prove, especially in a court of law. Consequently emotionally abused elders tend to remain in the abusive situation, as it is hard to report the matter to the police.

4.3 Financial abuse or material abuse

Financial abuse is probably one of the most common forms of elder abuse. Old persons, who are often confined to their homes, may be too dependent on other people to be able to handle their own financial affairs. But it is not only family members or members of the community who abuse elders in this way; professionals can also do so (Pritchard, 1996). This can happen through the illegal or improper exploitation or use of funds or material (Biggs et al., 1995). This form of abuse involves stealing or mismanagement of the elder’s money by the abuser. Elders may be forced to sign a will or hand over assets. A common form of financial abuse occurs by stealing old age grants.

4.4 Neglect

This type of abuse may be either passive or active. It effectively involves the following: a failure to provide medicine or food; a failure to provide the care and basic necessities required for physical and mental well-being. Elders may sometimes be allowed to live in unsanitary conditions or poorly heated rooms. Authors such as Kosberg and Nahmiash in addition include self-neglect as a form of elder abuse. They define this as a state whereby elders endanger themselves or fail to provide adequate self-care, which may lead to malnutrition, illness or excessive drinking. Although this form of abuse differs from other forms, families and friends may be aware of the neglectful behaviour but fail to intervene (Mckendrick & Hoffmann, 1990) due to lack of necessary resources or due to a lack of personal interest.

4.5 Violation of elders' rights

Elderly people may be unfairly confined or alternatively forced out of the home. Behaviour may be strictly controlled by denying the victims their fundamental right to freedom, security, and accurate information and not to be subjected to cruel and inhumane or degrading treatment.

4.6 Sexual abuse

This form of abuse is still viewed as a taboo, which makes it extremely hard to identify (Pritchard, 1996). Sexual abuse, which involves sexual assault, rape and harassment, means any sexual behaviour toward a person without their full knowledge or consent.

5. Causes of Elderly Abuse

Elderly persons are viewed as potential victims and are more vulnerable than the younger generations. As they become old, they become physically and psychologically challenged (Provincial Report, 2001). Their physical strength weakens and their memories become impaired. As a result they become more dependent on the people around them, be it financially, emotionally and physically. For them it is a transformation process from independence to dependence (Decalmer & Glendenning, 1993). They thus become vulnerable, and without people to take care of them they may loose touch with outside life. However, this is often the reason why others take advantage of them.

According to Johnson (1991) and Kosberg (1988) in Decalmer & Glendenning (1993), there are certain factors that put elderly persons and caregivers at risk for being abused and being abusers. The word caregiver, as used for the purposes of this paper, refers to those individuals who look after the elders permanently or temporarily, and who include the people in the same household or community members around the elders.

It has been found that female elders stand a high chance of being abused, usually because they are left without partners (Decalmer & Glendenning, 1993). It is assumed that most male elders predecease their spouses. Historically, because men become involved in wars and are employed in physically more dangerous jobs. Elders, who are dependent on caregivers and those who are impaired or frail are also more likely to be taken advantage

of and to be abused. This also applies to elders who have a history of abuse or a drinking problem.

Primary and secondary caregivers who abuse substances and who themselves have mental or emotional illnesses are also more likely to be abusive. When they are intoxicated, they tend to neglect the elders' basic necessities or mistreat them. Further, caregivers who lack experience in caregiving, are often likely to mistreat elders. Lack of knowledge on how to manage older persons often leads to neglect and other categories of abuse. The same applies to those caregivers who are financially dependent on the elders; they often mismanage or steal the elders' finances (Decalmer & Glendenning, 1993 and Pritchard, 1996).

Johnson (1991) and Kosberg (1988) in Decalmer & Glendenning (1993) also mention environment as another risk factor. This refers to lack of family support, marital problems in the family, sudden and unwanted changes in family circumstances. Baumhover and Beall (1996) state that incidents such as changes in living arrangements and conflicts that result in a loss of trust between family members may also trigger elder abuse. For instance when family members fight, they may transfer their problems onto the elders. Change of living arrangements could also have a negative impact on elders with visual or memory impairment and physical immobility.

In conclusion, this chapter defined and determined the concept of elder abuse. It included its extent, forms, consequences and causes as found by

other researchers who previously studied the abuse suffered by elders. The above-mentioned information provides the researcher with significant knowledge to proceed with the research.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1. Research Method

For any research project, it is necessary to collect the appropriate data. There are many research methods that can be used to obtain such information, ranging from experiments to in-depth interviews, which fall under both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

For the purpose of this research, the focus group and in-depth interview method (qualitative research method) was used. A qualitative researcher analyses data by organising it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts or similar features to make sense of the data by means of conceptualisation (Neuman, 1997). Both the researcher and the participants agreed that answers would be written down on paper and that there would not be any use of tape recorder because the writer was of the opinion that most people would feel uncomfortable and manipulated when their answers were being recorded, especially when personal issues were involved.

The interview schedule was divided into two categories, namely the focus group and the in-depth individual interviews. The focus group questions were more general and applicable to everyone. It was used to facilitate the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the participants through group interaction (Neuman, 1997). In contrast, the individual interview schedule was

more personalized, trying to identify and explain the abuse(s) suffered by each individual at their personal level.

The major advantage of both types of interviews was that the researcher was able to observe and make inferences in terms of congruency between the participants' words and their body languages. They also helped the researcher to ask for clarification through summarising and paraphrasing ideas and comments that were not clear or understood. This enabled the researcher to probe for more relevant information.

This research was based mainly on the primary source of information in that the researcher collected the data through conducting interviews. However, secondary sources were also used to extract certain information, namely from the existing participants' files that were available at the selected institution. Furthermore, several library books and online reports were also used to gather more information on elder abuse, although these tended to be mainly from overseas researchers. The research was aimed at gathering its data through a field research method, which was conducted at a home for the elderly.

The researcher and the participants jointly controlled the pace and direction of both the focus group interviews and the in-depth interviews. The basis of the interviews was the shared assumption that the selected population had been abused and that they knew and understood what abuse of the elderly was all about. The interviews consisted of a combination of structured and

unstructured questions, as they were in the form of conversations where there was no need for predetermined questions, although the interview schedule was designed and followed precisely. Questions were asked in the form of conversations and discussions. They consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The use of the designed interview schedule proved to be effective and fast, and was also useful in that it allowed the researcher to use other methods such as observation of participants' behaviour.

2. Selection of Participants

As in most qualitative research, a sample was selected. In this case it was chosen to represent those elders who had experienced abuse in their families and/or in their communities. Eight elderly persons were selected – five male and three female - to participate in the focus group and the in-depth individual interviews. Purposive sampling was adopted for the in-depth interview, as all of the eight participants were selected to participate in focus group interview. Selecting this sample helped to obtain enough participants for the research, which was half the total population of the elderly at the chosen institution. However, the sample was not large enough to represent the abuse suffered by the elderly people in the whole of the Western Cape Province, let alone in South Africa.

Participants were selected on the basis of the information contained from their files. They were selected without checking their age, race or gender. Those who had a history of being abused were selected and there were only eight of them. The dates for the interviews were then arranged with the interviewees.

The following is a list of the participants:

Gender	Race	Age	Grant	Religion
Female	Black	66	Old age	-
Female	Black	67	Old age	Christian
Female	Coloured	80	Old age	-
Male	Coloured	74	Old age	Christian
Male	Coloured	83	Old age	-
Male	White	62	-	-
Male	White	65	Disability	Christian
Male	White	71	Old age	Christian

Initially it was decided that only those participants who appeared to have been traumatized by the abuse and who expressed this during the focus group sessions would be identified for the in-depth interview. However due to the small number of the participants it was decided that all of them would participate in both the focus group and in the individual interviews. The arrangement was that the focus group would precede the in-depth interviews. The main reason for this was to enable participants to feel comfortable and to create an anxiety-free environment during the focus group, before interviewing them individually. This was done to encourage them to feel free to talk openly about the abuses they had experienced.

3. Research Process

St. Monica's Home in the Bo-kaap was chosen after telephonically contacting a number of old age homes in Western Cape with no success. Several old age homes who were contacted said that they had no abused elderly residents. Most of them mentioned that they only accommodated sickly elderly people who need 24-hour care. That is, they are not at the residential facility because they are abused, but because their family members are not available to care for them so intensively, as most adults in their families are employed and children attend schools during the day.

One organization did give permission to the researcher to conduct her research, namely one of the Shawco projects in Khayelitsha Town 2, which runs sessions with abused elderly persons. However it does not have a residential facility. Once permission was granted, everything was arranged in terms of time, venue and access to a translator, as the researcher is not fluent in the Xhosa language. Khayelitsha is one of the black townships in the Western Cape Province and it has sections that are very dangerous, especially for outside visitors. Various people who reside in Town 2 Khayelitsha were contacted telephonically and some were contacted face-to-face to find out how safe the area actually was. Almost all of them agreed that it was very dangerous regardless of where you reside and they warned the researcher not to go.

Based on the above-mentioned information, the researcher decided not to continue with the arrangements, but to change the place and the focus of the research. This also meant however that she had limited time to conduct the research as she had spent most of the available time trying to find a suitable setting and the participants for the research. Initially the research was aimed at focusing on black elderly individuals who experienced abuse in their families. The research was then changed to focus on elderly people regardless of race, who had suffered abuse from either their families or their communities.

The changes came about after contacting the manager of the St. Monica's Home telephonically. Access was granted, and the manager was asked to explain the research to the elders. The researcher then visited the institution to see the elderly people and read through their files. The above-mentioned Home presently accommodates approximately 14 elders. The Home opened fairly recently and most of the residents were referred by social workers or applied individually. While the researcher was reading through the files, she gathered that some elders were at the institution due to abuse from their families and communities, but that others had not been abused. Some of those who were not abused were there because they wanted to be independent and did not want to be a burden to their children. Some had no one to look after them, as their family members were either dead or overseas.

During the first day of the interviews, only two participants were available. The researcher decided to interview each one individually. The rest had gone out for a walk into town. This could have been because the interview had been arranged for Saturday and the manager did not work on weekends. Thus there had been no one present to tell them to wait until the interviews were over. Although this was disappointing and meant that time had been wasted, at the same time it was a lesson for the researcher to arrange appointments during the week. The next appointments were arranged for Monday and Thursday, for a structured qualitative group interview and individual in-depth interviews respectively. During these two scheduled days the interviews went well, although some participants were not keen to participate at first, for instance two males initially mentioned that they had nothing to tell and that they did not see a need for them to participate in the interviews. Moreover, one female participant completely refused to participate; she used cleaning her room as an excuse and she also claimed that she had nothing to tell. Therefore, in the end, the researcher only interviewed seven participants, in other words, 50% of the residents and 88% of those who had been abused participated in the interviews.

Confidentiality and anonymity were the golden rules, as we were discussing extremely personal experiences. This was done for the sake of protecting the elders, their families and the selected institution. Participants were assured that the information provided would be kept anonymous, as it would be utilized for purposes of the research report. Every participant was asked to

discuss abuse in general terms during the group interview, to avoid disclosing personal issues to everyone, unless the individual wished to share the experiences with others. During the in-depth sessions, however, participants were encouraged to talk about their personal lives and experiences. The participants were never coerced into giving information, but probing did occasionally occur during the sessions.

After each session and each in-depth interview, the whole interview data was summarized to the participants. The researcher tried to be a good listener and observer, but never forgot that she was a writer, researcher and a participant at the same time. This helped to ensure that the participants were comfortable with the questions asked. The researcher listened to verbal responses as well as observing non-verbal messages, communication and gestures.

4. Data Collecting and Data Analyses

Data was collected by writing down the responses in a notebook. The researcher wrote participants' answers as they spoke. Shorthand writing was used to ensure that as much information from the participant is recorded. After each session, the obtained information was revisited and typed clearly on the computer to avoid leaving out important information

The technique of writing down the responses in a notebook as opposed to using tape or video recordings may have indirectly affected the data recordings, in that one inevitably missed certain things that were happening while taking notes. It was impossible to write and observe everything at the

same time, which would have been possible if tape recordings had been used in conjunction with observations. One also tends not to write word-by-word of what the participants is conveying. Nevertheless, the researcher is confident that she managed to record most of the pertinent details during the interviews.

With regard to analyzing the data, information was put together in the computer and categorized into themes according to the questions asked during the interview.

5. Pilot Study

Before selecting the sample, the researcher did a pilot study with two elderly individuals at the Rondebosch bus stop to determine whether the research questions were well formulated and whether the research should continue. According to Neuman (1997), a pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study conducted before the main research in order to check the feasibility or to improve the design of the research. It can be useful for a number of reasons:

- If interviews are to be used, the questions may be tested to make sure that they make sense to the participants.
- It may be used to develop the research skills of those taking part in the project.
- It may help the researcher to develop ways of getting the full co-operation of those they are studying.

Based on what Neuman (1997) states about pilot projects, the researcher views herself as a person who believes in the necessity of pilot studies. Pilot studies help researchers to determine whether or not the research should go ahead. Although only two individuals were interviewed, the pilot study made the researcher aware that she was researching the right sample frame and that she would obtain the kind of information she was looking for. The researcher thus decided to continue with her preparations.

6. Limitations of the Study

The problems encountered during the research were few, but they all influenced the research in one way or another. One of the problems, as mentioned above, was the fact that on the first day of the interviews there were only two participants. This affected the planned time frame, as the researcher had to interview only the two participants instead of conducting the group interview. The researcher was also forced to reschedule for another meeting, which further extended her scheduled time frame.

Another problem the researcher encountered was, as mentioned above, when some participants refused to be part of the group. Time was spent unnecessarily while trying to persuade them to remain in the group. This led to other participants becoming impatient, although the researcher apologized for wasting their time. Her fear was that they would leave the group, but fortunately they did not do so. When one of the chosen female participants refused to participate during the interviews, it impacted on the research.

Instead of eight individuals, the researcher interviewed seven, which reduced the number of the selected sample.

Another problem was difficulties with time-schedules, as the researcher had in advance agreed with the participants in the individual interview that these would only take 45 minutes, but some of them took longer. This affected the research because the researcher had to compensate by interviewing other participants for less than thirty minutes. As a result, some participants were not asked question by question. The researcher had to summarize two or three questions in one to save time. Furthermore, the first two participants in the in-depth interviews complained that the time was too long, as they were rushing to do their daily/routine chores.

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CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, on the first day of the interviews the researcher saw only two participants. As a result, the focus group interviews only took place during the second meeting. Contracts with the participants were verbally made and clarified. The purpose of conducting the research was also clarified. The researcher ensured that the questions were clear, short and precise to enhance the participants' understanding, as some of them had hearing problems and required the researcher to speak louder. The session was characterized by general questions, without exploring personal issues. This was made clear to the participants at the outset, so that they would not feel embarrassed about what had happened to them and also to avoid feelings of anxiety.

The purpose of this session was to create rapport with the participants, to reduce their anxiety and to prepare them to open up during the individual sessions. Above all, it was aimed at obtaining as much information as one could in a group setting, and to find out about their knowledge regarding elder abuse.

1. Findings of the focus group session

1.1 Views regarding the nature of elder abuse

Most participants felt that elder abuse was very common and happening in families and in communities. They understood elder abuse to be a situation where elderly people were being victimized by their loved ones physically, financially and/or verbally. One participant indicated that community members were robbing elderly people of their pension grant. Another participant mentioned that he knew of a friend who had been beaten and kicked by his son for his own money. The son had wanted money to buy alcohol and when his father refused, they had fought. Participants seemed to understand that hitting or kicking an elderly person constituted abuse. They also seemed to have an understanding of what elder abuse is, based on the information they shared during the session.

1.2 Views on cultural aspects of elder abuse

“Lack of cultural background plays a role in people abusing their elders”, one participant said. People in general are not taught how to treat elderly persons. Another participant added that today’s generation is more independent and has their own houses far from their parents, which is why they do not learn and practice their traditions. In general, participants felt that they are being treated in exclusion and that they are not given the platform to educate the younger generation about their cultural customs. For instance, to provide

education on how to greet and talk to an adult person in a respectable manner – be it an African or Westernized way.

1.3 Views about the reaction by the officials to elder abuse

A concern was raised during the group session that no one cared about the elders who are experiencing abuse by their family members. It was mentioned that people regarded abuse by a family member as a family matter. Therefore nothing was done about it. Most participants specifically blamed the police for not responding to their cases. They mentioned that when they did in fact report the matter to the police, they were either laughed at or told that they must solve the problem as a family matter.

One participant looked very affected by the topic and asked the researcher to see her individually, so that she would be able to share with her what had brought her to the institution. She felt that talking about her personal experiences in front of every one might change the relationship between her and the other residents. She seemed afraid to be treated differently by the others. A meeting with her was then arranged after the focus group session to address her concern. The outcome of the meeting will be presented in the following section, on the findings of the individual interviews.

1.4 Views regarding consequences of the abuse

When asked how they felt about the abuse suffered by the elderly, one participant indicated that it was sickening to see children abuse their elder parents. He mentioned that he felt sadness and anger about it. Some

participants mentioned that it makes them upset and depressed but they do not know what to do about it as they are scared that disclosing could lead to further abuse or to feel humiliated by the society they live in. As a result, they withdraw themselves from other people to avoid talking about their experiences.

Another participant concurred, stating that our communities have changed for the worse. He mentioned that “violence is everywhere these days”; that there was no mutual respect between the younger generation and the older generation. The general response from the participants was that they felt angry and that this made them scared to trust anyone - be it in their families or their communities. As a result they felt restricted in the enjoyment of their old age.

1.5 Views regarding safety and shelter

When asked why elderly people moved from their families to an institution, some of them mentioned that it was because they did not want to be a burden to their family members. Some said that they wanted to be independent. However the majority mentioned that they did not feel safe at home, that there was much violence and that they were treated unfairly by family members. One participant said that her children treated her like she did not exist; they did not involve her in family decisions and yet they wanted her money all the time. She mentioned that in her black culture, elders were the decision-makers and their decisions should be respected by the younger generation. Another participant responded by indicating that, based on his family

upbringing, an elder parent should be informed of what was going on, but that this did not mean he or she should interfere in their children's lives.

1.6 Views regarding the abusers

Some of the participants reported without hesitation that the abusers should be arrested, as they did not deserve to be treated softly. They mentioned that the abusers did not belong in the community. One participant mentioned that he would not want his son to be arrested; he should rather leave the family and go elsewhere because jails were not nice environments. He also said that if his son were to go to prison, when he came out he would hate him for sending him to prison. However if someone not related was to abuse him, he mentioned that he would lay a charge at the police station.

Other participants thought that abusers should receive counselling because they are doing wrong. They need professional help advice and guidance. According to them this might help the abusers to realize that abusing their elders was not acceptable.

1.7 Preventative measures

In response to what should be done about elder abuse, most participants felt that there was a lack of education in schools and in communities on how to treat elderly people. It was also indicated that people should change their attitudes and perceptions about ageing in order to prevent abuse of the elderly. They also indicated that television and radio do not have programmes

specifically on respect of the elderly. They felt that media only focus on women and children abuse.

To summarize the session, participants mentioned that most elders found it difficult to deal with and to talk about when a child abused his or her own parent. However, when it was an outsider, they found it easier to report the case. The focus group discussion reflects participants' views about elder abuse generally – only to a very limited extent on how it affected them personally. The individual interviews, on the other hand, are all about their personal experiences.

2. Findings regarding the individual interviews

2.1 Biographical Information of the participants

2.1.1 Gender

Out of the seven participants interviewed, only two abused elderly individuals were females. The third abused elderly female (i.e. the eighth member of the sample) refused to be part of the interviews. Although a small number of people was thus interviewed, which made it impossible to generalize the findings, five males out of eight (seven) participants had experienced abuse. This reflects a different picture to what the literature indicated, namely that there are more males than females suffering abuse.

2.1.2 Race

Three white, three colored and two black elderly persons participated in the individual interviews. The study was initially aimed at black elders, but this changed due to unforeseen circumstances, as discussed in the previous chapter. The initial hypothesis, which was not tested due to the aforementioned, was largely based on the belief that black elderly persons often left their homes, families or communities to come to old age institutions because they were being abused. The researcher's assumption was proven wrong, in that at the selected institution there were also white and coloured elders who had left their families in response to abuse.

2.1.3 Age

The ages of the interviewed participants ranged between 62 and 83. (Refer to Table 1 in Chapter 3). The average age of participants was 71. Only two were in their 70's and the other two were in their 80's. This could be because the institution is still new, and as it has not admitted many elders thus far, and that many people do not know about it. Although the number of the interviewed individuals was very small, the participants' ages showed that elderly individuals suffered abuse regardless of how old are they and how physically able or strong they were.

2.1.4 Religion

Out of the seven participants, four indicated that they were Christians. However, they attended different churches. During the interviews they talked

about how often they went to church on Sundays and other weekdays. They also talked about their beliefs in God and how they wish God could lead their abusers one day to repent from what they did. They indicated how proud they are to believe in God as he helps them deal with what happened to them through prayers. They also indicated that believing in God helps them forgive those who abused them, as they are able to maintain contact with them either telephonically or through a visit.

2.2 Context of abuse

Most incidents mentioned by the participants occurred in the family context. Although some incidences were experienced outside the family context, the responses showed that family members and relatives committed a large number of abuses. One participant indicated that almost all her children participated in abusing her one way or another. Children and children –in -law seemed to be the most common perpetrators based on the interview findings.

2.3 Reported forms of abuse

Physical, emotional and verbal, financial and material abuses were the most frequently reported types of abuse, and of these, emotional and financial abuses were the dominant types reported. One participant was subjected to more than one form of abuse. She suffered physical, verbal and material abuse by her children.

2.4 Cultural values

Over half of the interviewed individuals indicated that the younger generations did not value their cultures and traditions. There was no self-respect, which resulted in no respect for others. White, black and colored elderly individuals felt the same. They reported that traditions and cultures were being totally undermined by people and were not practiced the way they should be. They felt that a lack of cultural values was the main concern and cause of elder abuse. The elders were treated like they did not belong in the world because of a lack of respect and integrity.

The majority of abuses of the elders were perceived to reflect the extent to which the institutions were used as a place of safety and security for the abused elderly individuals.

3. Discussion of Findings

Based on the number of individuals interviewed and on the findings, it is impossible to generalize or compare this study with other researches findings. However, the few findings mentioned would seem to indicate that elder abuse is a serious problem in South Africa, considering the fact that eight out of 14 elders in one institution have experienced abuse and have moved to an institution for safety considerations.

The main themes of the discussions were cultural and traditional beliefs and practices, the extent and the types of abuse suffered by elders, who the

abusers were, what should be done to them, and preventative measures to alleviate this “disease”.

Although most of the participants are in an institution because of the abuse they experienced, it has been found that most of them are still in contact with their family members or abusers. They visit, phone or write to them.

There is a major concern that families and communities lack information with regard to the management of elder abuse. There is no visible public education on how to deal with elderly people, which results in a lack of understanding and awareness of what precisely elder abuse is. Elders feel that they are given little correct information on the problems they experience, for example, not knowing where to go when they have problems with their family members.

Even though participants had different cultures and traditions, they shared similar concerns and experiences with regard to the lack of respect and integrity, specifically by younger people. This proves that regardless of one's colour, culture and beliefs, respect is a very important value. It has been found that elderly people's human rights are being violated by both family members and members of the community. Younger generations do not have patience and tolerance for elderly persons, and thus mistreat them.

It has been found though that blacks and coloureds believe strongly that traditionally extended families should care for their elderly individuals. Yet, this is not practiced these days. Lack of employment, inadequate housing and

poverty create exploitation, disrespect and abuse of elders. Family members throw elders out of their own houses, and people exploit them for their social grants. On the other hand, whites felt that they did not expect their families to look after them all the time, but they did need to be respected and honoured as adults in their families.

Most of the literature studied by the researcher indicates that the most frequent victims of elder abuse are females, probably because they live longer than their male counterparts. It has been found that most male elders do not experience abuse as they predecease their female spouses due to working in mines, being involved in wars or having dangerous jobs. The findings of this research however, showed that there are males who do experience abuse, although most of them experienced emotional abuse rather than physical and financial abuse.

The majority of the participants indicated that the abusers were their children and the in-laws, especially the daughters-in-law. The daughters-in-law did not perpetrate the abuse directly but drove the husbands into committing the abuse.

Various types of abuse were reported, however none of the participants mentioned sexual abuse either because they had never experienced it, or because they felt embarrassed to talk about it to the researcher. As a result, this made it difficult to estimate the extent of this type of abuse. Although financial abuse was reported, no incidents were related to the pension

problems mentioned above, i.e. there were no indications if pensions administered by someone else for his/her own benefit, demanding a share of the pension or bad attitudes towards the elders by the pension officials. The lack of any evidence in this regard is probably due to the limited sample in the study. Media reports have shown that such financial abuse does, indeed, occur quite commonly.

This study found that police officials do not treat elder abuse as a crime. They regard it as a family matter to be solved by family members. As a result, they are not willing to intervene when such cases are reported to them. Elderly people feel humiliated and embarrassed to report the cases due to the way they are treated by officials. Most elders complained that officials show no respect and patience for their rights. They feel they are being taken for granted. Officials are meant to provide help to the elderly who need their assistance and to be the role models to the younger generations on how elderly individuals should be treated, but they are not. Officials do not respond effectively and timeously to cases reported by elderly individuals.

It was also mentioned during the research interviews that abusers deserve to be arrested, although some respondents felt that, instead, they require assistance for the social services. Two approaches were discussed, that is, the welfare approach and the justice approach. Some felt that combining the welfare approach and the prayer or justice approach would help the perpetrators to change their behaviour quickly. For instance, if an abuser is sentenced to jail for abusing an elder, he or she should receive counseling

and rehabilitation to make him or her understand that whatever behaviour he displayed could be changed.

For those who believe in God, it was indicated that prayer was the first weapon to use when fighting abuse. As a result, abusers should receive counseling or be sentenced but at the same time they should be given opportunity to talk to God either through attending bible schools, churches or prayer. Based on these findings, collaboration of various governmental departments and NGO stakeholders could prove to be of importance in combating elder abuse.

It was also concluded that few programmes on elder abuse are in fact reaching the communities. As a result, it is impossible for family and community members to learn about elder abuse and its implications. People do have access to televisions and radios but very few programmes deal with elder abuse.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the issues concerning abuse of elderly people, causing them to seek refuge in an old age home. The discussions and findings have, in general, confirmed and supported what other researchers found previously about elder abuse. The difference is that this research focused on a sample of abused elderly persons themselves rather than on information provided by other people with regard to abuse. This helps one to understand experiences and views of abused elderly persons. Secondly, it also helps one to understand why some elderly individuals leave the families and communities they have lived in for many years and in which their memories are rooted, to move into old age institutions. Thirdly, it helps one to understand what happens behind closed doors, especially in cases where abuse occurs in a family context.

The research objective was achieved in that it has been found that some elder persons who suffered abuse in their families and/or communities move to old age institutions for shelter and security. This chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the literature and the research study. It will also present the recommendations arising from the findings and recommendations regarding further research on the topic.

Conclusions drawn from the findings of the focus group interviews are as follows:

Elder abuse affects many people, regardless of who the person is-rich or poor, educated or not, religious or not. It knows no age, gender or racial boundaries. It would appear, however, that the elderly from economically disadvantaged areas are at greater risk of abuse due to hardship caused by such factors as overcrowding and poverty. Lack of employment has proven to be among the causal factors of elder abuse. Most people tend to exploit and/or rob the elderly of their social grants or money.

Some people even go to such an extent that they physically attack their elderly parents for money, as they know that they cannot fight back since their physical strength has weakened due to ageing. They become vulnerable and potential victims in the eyes of the abusers, as confirmed by Decalmer and Glendenning (1993).

From the participants' responses during the interviews, it appears that there is a lack of traditional and customary practices, particularly in black communities. People are not practicing and following their traditional values regarding the management of elderly people.

Participants confirmed that they know what elder abuse is and they understand the various forms of abuse that occurs when abuse takes place.

However, they lack information on what to do about the situation. There is a lack of information on suitable resources for elderly people. When elderly persons experience abuse, they do not know where and who to turn to, which results in them remaining silent about the issue.

The literature review helped the writer to gain a greater understanding of elder abuse. It demonstrated that elder abuse is indeed a serious but hidden problem, and that most cases of abuse are either under-reported by the victims and their witnesses, or under-recorded, or mis-recorded by officials who believe that it is a family matter. As a result, abused elders may experience feelings of embarrassment, guilt and shame in response to what has happened to them.

The literature identified that abused elders tend to feel embarrassed and humiliated by the way officials treat them when they want to report the case of abuse. As a result, the elderly tend not to report the case. This leads to under-reporting of abuse cases and, frequently, to further abuse.

The majority of the participants indicated that there is a lack of safety and security at their homes and communities, which led them to move to institutions for the aged. At home they often receive unfair treatment and become exploited – especially in regard to their finances. Ongoing violence in communities and families is the main factor that made them move to an institution for safety.

Conclusions drawn from the findings in respect of the individual interviews:

According to the literature more elderly females experience abuse than their male counterparts. The results of this study differ in that, out of fourteen residents in the selected institution, seven males had experienced abuse by their family members prior to admission. In fact, out of seven interviewed participants, five were males and only two were females. However, due to the small sample, these findings cannot be generalized.

This study shows that elder abuse crosses all racial boundaries. Participants came from three racial categories, namely white, black and coloured. They had all suffered abuse, either in their families or in their communities. It appeared that they had similar experiences.

As the participants' age ranged between 60 and 85, it shows that abuse can take place regardless of how old one is. It also confirms what has been found in the literature, namely that abuse knows no age limits. Although a person is regarded an elder at the age of 60, he or she is still perceived as physically and psychologically strong unless she or he has been continually ill. This does not mean that such person cannot experience abuse. It also appears that most of the elderly suffer emotional abuse and financial exploitation rather than physical abuse.

Religion proved to be important to the respondents. Although not all of them talked about their religion, four revealed how proud they are to be Christians and that God helps them heal from their sufferings. Through God they are able to forgive those who abused them. It appears, therefore, that faith helps the elderly to deal with the trauma of abuse.

The findings have shown that family members and relatives, especially the children-in-law, commit much elder abuse, as most incidents mentioned occurred in the family context. However, there were some incidents that took place outside the family context.

The findings would also indicate that the most common forms of abuse were emotional and material/financial. Participants reported that they had been shouted at, excluded from family decisions and that either clothes or money were stolen from them by their children.

It also emerged from the findings that a decline in cultural norms and moral standards seemed to be among the causal factors for elder abuse. It was felt that the younger generation does not respect their customs and traditions regarding the treatment of older persons. This appeared to apply to the black, coloured and white population groups alike.

In order to ensure appropriate preventative measures for elder abuse, respondents emphasized the importance of media broadcasts and presentations on elder abuse in communities and schools. Lack of information

and education in communities about elder abuse, and a lack of resources for the elderly who have suffered abuse was found to be a cause for abuse.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Recommendation emanating from the findings of the study

- While it may seem expensive and time-consuming, it is very important that the Department of Social Services and NGO stakeholders working with elderly individuals ensure that people receive information in old age homes and in communities through churches, schools, etc, on elder abuse and the resources relevant to it.
- NGO's, volunteers and members of the community should participate in improving and providing access to information centres on abuse and its consequences. Their participation could help re-unite the abused individual and the abuser.
- Information on cultural values by elderly people should also be disseminated in schools and communities, as this will help people understand their cultures and traditions better than they do at present. It could also enhance positive and accepted cultural values regarding respect for the elderly in communities.

- The role players in the criminal justice system, namely prosecutors and magistrates, but in particular police officials, should receive intensive training on the management of elder abuse cases, both in terms of the administration of abuse protocol and on the needs of the elderly generally. Police officers are the first to encounter reported cases on abuse and, therefore, should be able to deal with them appropriately.
- Counselling services should be provided in old age homes and retirement homes. Family circumstances and what brought the elders to such homes should be considered during such counseling, as families may have to be included in the counselling.
- Elder abuse should not be regarded as merely a family matter, but abusers should either be arrested and punished, or, where appropriate, should be rehabilitated. This would make abusers realize that abusing elderly people is a serious matter, and is not acceptable.

2.2 Recommendations regarding further research

Arising from the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed for further studies:

- The research sample size was very small and limited. It focused on one institution that had a small number of elders (eight out of a total of fourteen residents) who experienced abuse, which made it impossible to represent the population of the elderly generally accurately. It is

recommended that a larger sample size be selected from several and diverse institutions. It is also recommended that the gender and racial qualities be balanced to avoid bias. This will also assist the researcher to make more appropriate generalizations.

- Both focus group and individual in-depth interviews should be conducted, with more than one session for each participant to help reduce their anxiety and to encourage an open discussion and interaction among the participants.
- A more detailed literature review is required to guide the research process and the researcher.
- The time for each in-depth interview should be well planned and discussed with the participants prior to the interviews.
- Clear and timeous arrangements should be made with the person organizing the participants, etc. before the field researcher commences with the work. For example, finding out which day and time are suitable for the participants, and whether the participants will be available for the research sessions.
- Additional participants should be selected, in the event that some refuse to participate – which was the case in this study.

- A pilot project should involve more than two participants to determine whether or not the research should go ahead, and what could be changed or improved in the interview schedule. It is difficult to determine whether the researcher is on the right track if only two individuals are part of the pilot study – as in the current study.

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APPENDICES

Introduction

Elder abuse is a serious problem in South Africa. Elderly people suffer abuse in a family and community context. They are treated badly by their family members and members of the community. It is through these perceptions that I thought it would be of importance to conduct a research at an old age institution to find out more about this concept and the people who suffered the abuse.

As a result I would like to ask you about your understandings and experiences in elder abuse in your families or communities. This information will be obtained through group discussions and individual interviews since some of the questions are personal. Participants' names would not be disclosed and the information provided would be treated confidentially. Participants would not be forced to answer questions that are against their beliefs. The information provided would be recorded in writing for the research paper purposes.

Interview schedule:

Individual in-depth

1. What do you consider to be abuse of the elderly?
2. What kind of abuse(s) have you suffered or experienced?
 - Physical abuse
 - Sexual abuse
 - Financial abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Other

Please describe how were you abused.

3. How are you related with the abuser?
4. For how long did the abuse happen?
5. What were the consequences of the abuse you suffered?
6. How did you feel at the time of the abuse?
7. What was your reaction to the abuse?
8. Have you responded to the abuse? Yes / No
 - If yes - how?
 - If no – why not?

9. Have you reported the abuse? Yes/No

If so - to whom did you report the abuse?

- Social workers
- Police officers
- Family members
- Friends
- Other

10. When did you leave your family to an old age home?

11. Why did you leave your family? Please explain what made you leave?

12. How do you feel now that you are in an old age home?

13. Does your family members and friends know where you are?

14. Do they contact you? Yes/No

15. What form of contact do they use?

- Telephone
- Letter
- Visit
- Other

16. How often do they contact you?

17. If you had a choice, where would you prefer to be?

- Home
- St. Monica's Home
- Other

18. If you would prefer to be with your family, what stops you from being with them?

19. Have you forgiven the person who abused you? Yes/No

If no, why not?

If yes, is there any reason that made you forgive him/her?

20. In your view, what should be done to abusers?

21. In your opinion, how could the abuse against the elderly people be prevented?

22. Any other views you may wish to share concerning the abuse of the elderly.

Interview Schedule:

Focus group

1. What do you understand by the abuse of the elderly?
2. What kind(s) of abuse(s) do elderly people suffer?
3. Who are the abusers for elderly people?
4. How do you feel about elderly abuse?
5. What makes elderly people leave their families for old age homes?
6. Do elderly people report their abuse to officials or to other people?
7. What do you think should be done to persons who abuse elderly people?
8. What do you think should be done about elderly abuse?
9. Any views you would like to share regarding elderly abuse?



Department of Social Development

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9 April 2002

To whom it may concern

Ms Iris Mashamba is a Masters student in the Department of Social Development at the University of Cape Town.

As part of her Masters studies Ms Mashamba has to conduct a research project on a specific topic. She has chosen to investigate the nature of abuse suffered by a selected group of elderly persons in their communities.

We would appreciate it if you would grant Ms Mashamba permission to conduct her research.

Dr RR Graser
Coordinator: Postgraduate Research

Attention: Ms. L. Klaasen

The Manager
St. Monica's Home

23 June 2002

Dear Linda

I would like to take this opportunity and send a most sincere gratitude to you and to all individuals who participated in my research. I gratefully acknowledge your energetic contributions throughout our meetings. Your kindness, participation and understanding made my research possible.

My gratitude towards you goes beyond measure that even if I said thank you a million times it still would not be enough.

I wish you all the best and God bless you.

Yours sincerely,

iris masnamba
UCT Masters student