

PEANOW
**Prevalence study of Abuse and Violence against Older
Women**



1

Literature review (Greece)
José Ferreira-Alves & Ana J. Santos
School of Psychology, University of Minho

October, 2009

Abstract

2

The present paper objective was to identify, describe and compare the prevalence of older adult's abuse and neglect studies developed in Greece. Through international databases and reports from Non Governmental Organisations a relevant lack of data on older adult's abuse and neglect was encountered. The only study found aimed at communitarian setting, identifying a prevalence value of 16.4%. Psychological abuse was prevalent, especially through verbal offensive mistreatment. The major findings related to characteristics of victims and perpetrators came across what has already been found in international literature. Women appeared as a vulnerable group, as well as those older adults aged 70 years or under. The perpetrators were mostly men and were related to the victims, comprehending adult children the majority of the cases. Finally, older person's abuse and neglect in Greece should be more consistently address, so more recent values and the dynamics of the phenomenon can be known.

Index

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Method	5
3. Scope of the prevalence of older adults' abuse and neglect	5
3.1. Greek older adult´s population.....	5
3.2. Definitions.....	6
3.3. Prevalence of older adult´s abuse and neglect.....	7
3.4. Who where the victims and the perpetrators?.....	8
3.5. Methodology.....	10
4. Conclusion.....	11
5. References.....	13

1. Introduction

Violence against older adults has been recognized as an important problem with serious consequences for the victim and to the society, although relatively recent topic of research (Lachs & Pillmer, 2004).

In Greece, the country aimed in this paper review, only one study was found regarding the estimation of older adult's abuse and neglect (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995). Although showing a high prevalence of the phenomenon, there were no more studies approaching and exploring this theme.

The present paper reviews the study developed, in order to assess the prevalence of abuse and neglect known in the country as well as the several characteristics associated with it.

Firstly, the method intended to collect the studies is described, along with the databases and key words employed. Subsequently the older adult's population characteristics and the family structure in the country are examined. The theoretical frame of the phenomenon is addressed, considering the nomenclatures and definitions privileged. Forwardly the prevalence data of the study is reviewed additional to the social and demographic characteristics of victims and perpetrators. Finally the methodology of the study is looked upon, namely, the sampling method, instruments and procedures employed to conduct the study.

2.1. Databases, descriptors and range of years covered

5

The paper methodology employed consisted in a bibliographic review carried out in the databases of EBSCOhost, PsyArticles and ProQuest. In all of the databases six descriptors were used, namely: 1) elder abuse; 2) elder maltreatment; 3) domestic violence; 4) family violence; 5) prevalence of elder abuse; and 6) older women. The only language employed was English. No previously criterion was considered, except the fact that the studies aimed at prevalence of the phenomenon. Hence only one prevalence study was found, the research was broadening to international reports from Non-Governmental Organisations displayed electronically on the internet. Additionally articles referring domestic violence in Greece were also gathered as complements of the prevalence study reviewed.

3.1. Greek older adult's population

By the time of the first survey on elder abuse in Greece (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995) the elderly population was already increasing. In 1960 persons over the age of 60 constitute 12.2% of the population, number that rapidly increased to 16.9% by 1981 (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995). In 2008 the older adults population (aged 65 years old or more) had reached to 18.63%, number expected to increase until 18.85% by 2010 and 21.13% by 2020 (Giannakouris, 2008).

The prevalence study developed in 1991 (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995) presented several features of the Greek older adults population. A lower ratio between males and females for persons of 65 years of age and over was identified and while women comprised 18.3% men only comprised 15.3% of the older adult's population (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995). The widening gap in survival rates between the sexes created a situation in which a much higher percentage of males (88.1%) than females (45.2%) were

married; for those over the age of 80, only 8.6% of the women and 62.5% of the men were married and only 6% of the males were widowers in comparison to 28.2% of the women (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995). Most of the older adult's population lived alone in its one household as long as both spouses were alive and after one of them dies the other went to live with one of their children (Loizos, 1986; in Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995).

6

Even nowadays the family type in Greece is described as an extended one, that is, adult members are responsible for taking care of their old relatives (Stathopoulos, 1999; Chatzifotiou, 2003). Therefore isn't surprisingly that most of the care given to the older adults in Greece is provided by the informal care system, including spouses, children, neighbors, relatives or friends (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995; Daskalopoulos et al., 2007). In fact the percentage of older Greeks living in residential homes is less than 1% (Lamura, 2003; Daskalopoulos et al., 2007). This data reveals that the majority of older adult's abuse and neglect in Greece probably takes place within the domestic environment.

3.2. Definitions

The violence against older adults is usually named elder abuse and neglect in Greek literature, while the term mistreatment is employed as the practice of the abuse (Daskalopoulos et al., 2007; Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995).

Regarding its definition, in the researched papers, no one was advanced, although the prevalence study here considered did defined the several forms it could assume. Therefore Pitsiou-Darrough and Spinellis (1995) described elder abuse and neglect as any form of active or passive mistreatment. Active mistreatment includes intentional harm or abuse, such as physical, psychological and legal, against older persons, whereas passive mistreatment implied unintentional harm such as neglect or abandonment. Physical abuse was defined as any form of bodily violence; psychological abuse was defined as mental anguish and legal

abuse as material exploitation and misuse or theft of an elder's money or other assets. Finally neglect was divided in environmental or psychological, regarding the withholding of the older person from psychological and physical needs.

3.3. Prevalence of older adult's abuse and neglect

Older adults abuse and neglect, although brought to the public arena since 1980, is still not properly accessed and highly underreported, sometimes not even properly recognized by professionals (Agathonos-Georgopoulou, 1997, in Daskalopoulos et al., 2007; Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995). In fact, the present paper review was only able to find one prevalence study of the phenomenon (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995), the only one at the moment, according to Daskalopoulos et al. (2007).

At the same extent, the domain of family violence, where elder abuse is included, mostly focuses on violence against children and women (Antonopoulou, 1999; Chatzifotiou, 2003; Costava, 2004; Daskalopoulos et al., 2007) and when data regarding women is reported it usually doesn't provide differentiation according to age, therefore making it impossible to observe this phenomenon in older women.

Even so, additionally to the prevalence study of Pitsiou-Darrough and Spinellis (1995) data on the phenomenon had already been retrieved by the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Department of Aging in 1987 (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 1995), where information was requested to some of the major hospitals in Athens area. Through the examination of the admittance records and the emergency department books during the months of May through August 1987, very low values of physical mistreatment were found. The results indicated that of all patients only 33 cases were diagnosed as beatings (equal to 0.2%). Of the 33 cases, only six (18.2%) were persons 65 years of age and older. However, all hospitals implied that the major problem was that of neglect or abandonment, and not of

physical abuse. These results, that can't obviously be considered representative, positioned very underneath of those found in Pitsiou-Darrough and Spinellis (1995).

The synthesis of the study developed by Pitsiou-Darrough and Spinellis (1995) regarding the prevalence of elder abuse and neglect in communitarian setting in 1988, is displayed in Table 1. The authors employed a representative sample of older adult's population of one major district of the country, Attica, where one third of all population lives. Since the participants were gathered from Day Care Centers for the Elderly (KAPH), a control group was also included, that did not frequent those centers. Although not representatively, data was also gathered from major hospitals and other KAPH centers through questionnaires sent to professionals contacting with older adults population.

Prevalence situated at 16.4%, although the control group presented a lower value of 12.35%. Psychological abuse was prevalent in the study group, particularly by verbal offensive behavior, although the service providers did encountered neglect and physical abuse as the most common forms of abuse. Similarly physical abuse was found to be higher than neglect in the study group with equal prevalence in the control group. It should also be regarded that from all abused older adults a higher percentage (38.45%) of the subjects experienced more than one form of abuse: 11.11% suffered two types; 18.8% experienced more than three and 8.54% experienced more than five different acts of abuse.

3.3. Who are the victims and the perpetrators?

Regarding the victims characteristics in all samples, similar characteristics were found between the study and the control group. Women were the most victimized when comparing to men population, not only in the control and study group, but as well in information gathered from service providers.

Table 1 Synthesis of Pitsiou-Darrough and Spinellis (1995)

Sample gathering		Data collection		Results	
Sample and Participants	Procedures	Instruments	Procedures	Total abuse	Types of abuse
<p>N = 506 older adults aged 60 or more years</p> <p>Control Group = 251 older adults aged 60 or more years</p> <p>Exclusive criteria: being institutionalized and having cognitive impairment</p>	<p>Ten Day Care Centers for the Elderly (KAPH) from the county of Attica (where one-third of Greeks lived) were randomly selected out of a list of 71 centers operating in 1988. In each center, the interviewer selected a random number of respondents.</p> <p>A random sub-sample of elderly respondents was selected from the same ten communities</p>	<p>Interview schedules were developed for both sample and control group:</p> <p>The instrument encompassed information regarding: demographic characteristics, subject's lifestyle and family structure and abuse and neglect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical abuse was measured by a series of items that covered a range of violent behaviors, from being pushed or beaten to being sexually abused. Psychological abuse was measured using a single item regarding verbal abuse or insults Legal abuse was measured by a single question Neglect was measured by a series of items designed to determine if the older person needed help with daily living activities and if help was withheld Abuse and neglect information also included the health consequences; the perpetrators characteristics, place where abuse occurred and the subject's perception of the reason for the abuse. All sections included questions regarding abuse of another person. 	<p>After consent to cooperate from the respondents the interview was carried out individually by a trainee social worker from each of the KAPH center.</p> <p>Most of the interviews took place in home.</p>	<p>N = 16.4%</p> <p>CG = 12.35%</p>	<p>24% Physical 19.2% Material 34 % Psychological 22.8% Neglect</p> <p>15% Physical 30% Material 40% Psychological 15% Neglect</p>
144 hospitals and 211 KAPH	Letters were sent to all the service providers of the KAPH centers and the state hospitals of the other districts of Greece, requesting cooperation	Questionnaire encompassing information about the victim and her observable characteristics; the perpetrators characteristics and data on the care provider, personal and professional work experience and knowledge regarding elder abuse.	Questionnaires were sent and received by letter, after the service providers agreed to participate	131 questionnaires were returned	32.4% Physical 9.2% Material 16% Psychological 42.4% Neglect
Records of police station of the ten communities	The police records were examined to determine if any crimes had been committed against persons over the age of 60 during a six-month period (October 1988 through February 1989)			35 men and 30 women over 60 years old victims of abuse 93.8% material abuse and 6.2% verbal or physical abuse	

Age was equally distributed by the different samples and those under 70 years old appeared to experience significantly more abuse, than the older participants.

Abuse and neglect was lower in those adults living alone, although 67% of the older adults study group lived with a relative. In comparison the information gathered through the service providers did showed that most of the older adults identified by them as victims lived alone (63%). This may be related also to the values of neglect (70%) presented by the service providers, higher than those found in the study and the control group.

10

The older adults abused and/or neglected identified, both in the study and the control group, their health status as not very good and the majority had a very poor self-concept, very low levels of life satisfaction and low organizational participation (cultural and recreational local associations).

In what the perpetrators is concerned, 51% were, in the study group, a family member, most often the adult children. This value is considerably lower in the data provided by the service providers, were only 38% of the perpetrators were relatives.

When the police record are considered, it can be observed that most of the older adults reporting being victims of abuse, where in fact men. However most of the complaints were related to material abuse, which could be less emerged in cultural and societal values implicated in domestic violence and that influence the underreporting of the phenomenon.

3.5. Methodology

In what regards methodology three different methods for gathering the data were considered, one aimed a representative sample of older adults population, while the other two directed to professionals working with the population and official police records. Institutionalized older adults and those with some sort of cognitive impairment were

excluded. It also should be noted that the age cut value regarded for this study was 60 years old or more, although data from National Statistical Service of Greece (Daskalopoulos et al., 2007) do considered older adults those with 65 years old or more.

The instruments were all developed specifically for the study purpose and besides measures of abuse and neglect, also included other information regarding social and demographic characteristics of the victims, perpetrators and in the case of the service providers, information concerning their professional work and knowledge about abuse.

The older adult's interview was conducted privately; by a trainee interviewer who had previously in the KAPH centers presented itself and the study purpose, and took place mostly in the residence of the participants. The service provider's questionnaires were sent by letters after a primer communication presenting the study and requesting collaboration.

Finally, since data of response rate and instruments validity and reliability isn't provided the methodology can't be fully assess. However taking into consideration the high prevalence found, it appears that instruments applied face-to-face in private spaces probably are efficient to address the phenomenon.

4. Conclusion

Older adults abuse and neglect in Greece has only been assessed by one study developed twenty years ago (Pitsiou-Darrough & Spinellis, 2005). Overall abuse and neglect in communitarian setting appeared to have higher values (16.4%) than those already reported in western countries (Lachs and Pillemer, 2004, Marmolejo, 2008). However the data from the study should be regarded carefully, taking into account that the study was undertook twenty years ago and although a representative sample was used, it only regarded on district of the country.

Despite the necessity of more data on the phenomenon, recognize by some authors (Chatzifotiou, 2003; Daskalopoulos et al., 2007), attribute this lack of research to a still not fully awareness from Greek society; a report on Europeans perception of Long Term Health Care (Secretariat General of the European Commission Comission, 2007) Greece ranked the second highest levels (64%) of populations perceiving risk of older people being maltreated. In addition, Daskalopoulos et al. (2007) in a study developed to understand Greek populations perception on older adult's abuse and neglect showed that the population perceived severe acts of aggression in all types of abuse, such as neglect or abandonment. One of the most cited subcategories of abuse overall was verbal aggression. Perhaps the Greek public finds the older population particularly vulnerable to this type of mistreatment. This emphasis is consistent with the findings of Spinellis and Pitsiou-Darrough (1995), who reported that verbal abuse was the most common form of mistreatment experienced in their study.

Additionally to verbal abuse, that includes itself in the psychological abuse category, overall results found by Spinellis and Pitsiou-Darrough (1995) present similar features to those encountered by international literature, namely, the prevalence of psychological abuse, the majority of female victims and a majority of relatives as the perpetrators (Lachs and Pillemer, 2004; Marmolejo, 2008).

Finally, accurately understanding of elder abuse and neglect in Greece was limited, hence only one prevalence study was encountered. Although the results permit to find approximation to what has been done in other countries more research is needed in order to estimate and comprehend the dynamic of the phenomenon.

5. References

Antonopoulou, C. (1999). Domestic Violence in Greece. *American Psychologist*, 1: 63-63

Chatzifotiou, S. (2003). Violence against women and institutional responses: the case of Greece. *Journal of Social Work*, 6(3):241-256 doi: 10.1080/1369145032000164555

Costavara, K. P. (2004). *National report, Greek National Observatory of Violence Against Women*. Greek National Observatory. Retrieved August 28, from http://www.epacvaw.org/IMG/pdf/National_Report_2009.pdf

Daskalopoulos, M. D., Kakouros, A. & Stathopoulou, G. (2007). Perspectives on Elder Abuse in Greece. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 18(2): 87-104 doi:10.1300/J084v18n02_06

Giannakouris, K. (2008). Ageing characterizes the demographic perspectives of the European societies. Population and social conditions. Eurostat, EUROPOP2008 Retrieved September 10, 2009 from <http://www.madrid.org/iestadis/fijas/otros/descarga/proyeceu0860.pdf>

Lachs, M. S. & Pillemer, K. (2004). Elder abuse. *Seminar*, 364(2): 1263-1272.

Marmolejo, I. I. (2008). *Maltrato de personas mayores en la familia en España*. Fundación De La Comunitat Valenciana Para El Estudio De La Violencia (Centro Reina Sofía): Valencia

Pitsiou-Darroug, E. N. & Spinellis, C. D. (1995). Chapter 4: Mistreatment of the Elderly in Greece. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 6(3): 45-64 doi:10.1300/J084v06n03_04

Secretariat General of the European Commission (2007). *Health and long-term care in the European Union*. European commission. Retrieved September 10, 2009 from http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/studies_on_health_care_en.htm