
AGEING WITH DIGNITY: RETHINKING POLICY FRAMEWORK THROUGH A RIGHT-BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Elder abuse is a growing and multifaceted social concern in society that is unfairly increasing and recognized at the world level, and India is not exempt either. At its core, it must be treated as a deep violation of injustice to human rights, as older persons commonly go through physical, psychological, financial, emotional, and sometimes sexual exploitation from trusted family members who are expected to safeguard them in their later lives (Casella, 2025). The paradox of the Indian family context is that elders are considered the primary source of care, but it is also the most common site of abuse. Elders mostly rely on their families or close relatives—including spouses, children, and in-laws—who are often identified as primary perpetrators (PTI, 2019). Evidence shows that approximately one-sixth of the older population is subjected to some form of abuse or mistreatment at the hands of trusted individuals (WHO, 2024). Most victims remain silent due to fear, dependency, and deep-seated social stigma (Chatterjee, 2024). This cycle results in victimization that largely remains invisible or unnoticed by the state or public institution and civil society organization. Despite several upheld protections established by both central and state governments, the reason behind the increase in elder mistreatment still occurring is a question. The legislative framework and all welfare schemes existing until now are primarily concentrating, typically, on the financial support and property provisions. The pivotal gaps, mainly the different dimensions of abuse unaddressed in the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (MWPS) of 2007 and inadequate systematic establishment along with the institutional barriers, negatively impact the efficiency of these provisions. This paper critically examines the shortcomings by analysing the legislative gaps and institutional barriers, especially to view the need of elders to be satisfied in a rights-based manner rather than just a welfare-oriented one and also points the extensive policy reforms that incorporate the crucial policy systems, including legal enforcement, social welfare, and community participation

Keywords: Elder Abuse, Senior Citizens, Human Rights, Legal and Welfare Provisions, Institutional Barriers, Policy Interventions, Rights-Based Approach, MWPS Act 2007.

Introduction

The world is undergoing a significant transition in demographic aspects, which restructures the society and every element of it, such as family structure, education, economy, migration, and social and cultural values. The global geriatric population estimation surveyed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in 2025 underlines the steady rise of the geriatric population, which is predicted to double from 703 million to 1.5 billion by 2050. Such growth increases considerable concern about a demographic shift. The elderly population in India also show these global trends. According to the Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections of July 2020, the elderly population is expected to rise to 193.4 million by 2031. This shows a notable growth when compared to the census of 2011, marking up 8.6% of the total population. Now, India will become the home for millions of elderly people (Press Information Bureau, 2024). In India, the elderly people (60 and above) constitute 10.5 per cent of the population as a whole in 2022, and the share of the population may anticipate 15 per cent by 2046 (Natarajan, 2025). The remarkable advancement of medical science, which can prevent and cure various health concerns; technological advancement; increased sanitation; nutrition; and food security have enhanced the sustained increase in life expectancy of the human population and reduced mortality rates. Even though the advancements in these areas are a gift to society and people's lives, they also give rise to critical challenges, creating new social and public health challenges, increasing the vulnerability of senior citizens to neglect and abuse and giving rise to victimization during the golden years that affects the happy life of elders (Khan et al. 2024).

Historically, the Indian cultural context and social values position the elders always in a prominent position for respect and integrity. Several studies show that the predominant religions prevalent in India, such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, treated elders with utmost respect and considered them the reservoir of knowledge (Chattopadhyay & Singh 2024), blessings, and foundation of family unity and social harmony. Earlier, most of the families adopted the joint family, which was the notable and traditional strength of the Indian family system. This unique feature gives rise to personal safety, a sense of companionship, protection, and well-being for the older individuals. Elders held a position

of honor and were decision-makers in families with their vast knowledge and experience and guardians of culture. Another major significance of Indian families is the system of collective families; this system is a symbolism of love and social support and everyone works for economic stability (Rubi, 2021). However, the richness of culture has undergone significant degradation due to the strong influence of westernization, modernization, globalization, and urbanization on societal life (Ahuja, 2018). These transformations have gradually fragmented the essence of Indian families as a whole. Migration from urban to rural regions, international migration, and nuclearization have all resulted from individuals' increased focus on better earning opportunities and career growth. As an impact of these structural changes within families, it led to catastrophic consequences, particularly affecting the elderly people. This shift has impacted not only the family structure but also the attitudes of the younger generation toward filial obligations. In India, elderly people's physical and financial support largely comes from their families. The physiological and psychological weaknesses caused by aging and illness have a profound impact on their social lives, leading to social withdrawal, power imbalance, and feelings of being a burden to others. This situation makes them more susceptible to a wide range of abusive situations.

Elder abuse is a severe socio-psycho-legal issue where any action or inaction may jeopardize the life of senior citizens (primarily those who are 60 years and older) (Kumar & Bhargava, 2014). The offending party in many cases will likely be someone who has a close connection to the victim—especially someone with whom he/she has developed a sense of trust (CDC, 2024). The transition into later life often results in a significant loss of the roles and responsibilities once held by the individual, most notably their status as a primary decision-maker. Loss of job and financial instability, often coupled with deteriorating health, forces many elders into a state of confinement within the sanctity of the home. This makes it exceedingly difficult for the public or law enforcement to detect the hidden victimization occurring behind closed doors, and the silence of elders leads to the basic rights of humanity (Kumar, 2023), and social justice needs immediate attention. They are often forgotten or less noticeable victims when society addresses abuse or victimization. They are subjected to a variety of forms of abuse, including physical assaults such as pushing, beating, kicking, forceful feeding, administering unwanted medication, and hair pulling; emotional loneliness or emptiness; verbal aggression, insult, and humiliation; financial exploitation such as improper use of older individuals' money, assets, and property; disregard for basic necessities—food, clothing, basic hygiene, and medical treatment; and social withdrawal and sometimes sexual

abuse, which involves non-consensual sexual contact. (Jandu et al., 2024 & Kaplan, 2025).

Objectives

The Constitution and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPS) Act, 2007, provide legal provisions to address against elder abuse in India. However, an analysis of the overall situation of elder abuse in India reveals significant gaps in the existing legal framework (constitutional and statutory law) and welfare schemes governing elder protection. This paper aims to critically analyse these shortcomings in legal as well as institutional barriers that hinder the effective implementation of these laws and recommends legislative and institutional reforms to strengthen and improve the efficiency of elder protection in India through a rights-based approach.

Victimhood in twilight years

The reported incidence of elder abuse varies across different countries, falling between 2.2 per cent to 90.4 per cent and in India, the prevalence reported is between 9.6 per cent and 61.7 per cent. (Chandanshive et al., 2022). The abuse of elders occurs in Indian families mainly due to the reliance of parents on their children, especially elder women, to meet their basic needs. A report of the Age Well Foundation survey on 10,000 older women in 2024 shows that 71.3 per cent relied on family members; among them, more than 45 per cent have been subjected to abuse by their family members themselves, and 51.5 per cent elderly women face gender discrimination (PTI, 2024). Notably, this data shows the gender disparity in elder abuse; notably, among the elders with functional disabilities, compared to men, women have a higher probability of being mistreated with more than one disability (Sathya & Premkumar, 2020). Research shows that the victims are three times more likely to have higher chances of fatalities than those who have not faced abused (Patel et al., 2021). The survey also indicates 14.3 per cent of seniors live alone (PTI, 2024), this living arrangement indeed alerts the increased risk of chronic illnesses among them (Agrawal, 2012).

In India, the majority of the elders live with their families, and they are considered the main offenders against older individuals. The reports reveal that 21 per cent of daughters-in-law and 35 per cent of elders experienced abuse from their sons' individuals (Vats, 2022). According to the study conducted by Chaurasia & Srivastava (2020), the high prevalence of ill-treatment toward older adults in India was verbal abuse or mistreatment (90 per cent), disrespect

behaviour (52.5 per cent) and negligence (45.21 per cent), and these forms of mistreatment experienced by elderly people could lead to emotional and psychological impact. However, the study results also reflect that 61 per cent of female elders had a high incidence of neglect. The Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI) survey data further demonstrates the most reported incidences of emotional abuse occurred within the state of Uttarakhand (100 per cent), and physically abused elders were reported in Arunachal Pradesh (45 per cent), financial exploitation incidences highly reported in the state of Chhattisgarh (53 per cent) (Pihal & Kundu, 2021, as cited in Yadav, 2024). As revealed by the survey of HelpAge India titled Elder Abuse in India-2018, it depicts that “elder abuse is high in Mangalore recorded the highest percentage (47 per cent), followed by Ahmedabad (46 per cent), Bhopal (39 per cent), while Amritsar (35 per cent), Delhi (33 per cent), and Kanpur (30 per cent)”. The incidents of elder abuse occur more often behind closed doors throughout Indian society. Victims of elder abuse may feel more vulnerable because the abuser typically is a trusted individual. Therefore, victims may remain silent about the abuse or fail to report, not realizing that such actions violate their rights.

Literature Reviews

When scrutinizing the current research on the MWPC Act regarding its effectiveness for senior citizens, it reveals notable shortcomings in both its legal framework and its implementation. Sharma (2022), drawing on findings from the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India, highlights the factors that increase the risk of abuse or mistreatment, particularly among women, individuals residing in rural areas, and those from economically marginalized backgrounds. Similarly, Issac et al. (2021) also identify several limitations within the MWPC Act through their research. The inefficiency of the act is attributed to reasons such as restricted maintenance amounts, inadequate awareness among elderly individuals, hesitance to report abuses due to societal stigma, and a weak administrative structure that hinders access to justice. Furthermore, the inadequate dedicated tribunals, system delays in judicial processes, difficulties in effective enforcement, improper establishment of old age homes in states at district levels, difficulty in accessing institutional care and lack of accountability mechanisms further weaken the implementation of the act. Similarly, surveys conducted by the prominent NGO in India, HelpAge India Foundation (2023), during their study on awareness about the MWPC Act, 2007, and the underreporting of abuse of elderly, particularly emphasize poor awareness about the Act, which indicates ineffective implementation. Complementing this,

another survey by the well-known NGO, Age Well Foundation (2023), regarding the underreporting of elder abuse reveals fear, social stigma, and lack of awareness, underscoring the absence of mandatory reporting mechanisms. Mital (2021), in the study, reflects a legal perspective and suggests that the MWPC Act is architecturally weak, as it tries to address various issues in the areas of maintenance, old age homes, and healthcare, thus causing it to be ineffective. Damaraju et al., 2025 state that the MWPC Act and legal interventions have core inadequacies such as weak enforcement, outdated policies, and declining filial responsibility, which continue to place the elderly at risk. All the existing literature repeatedly focuses on how important it is to have an overall rearrangement of the act, highlighting the need for comprehensiveness to ensure dignity and protection for older adults.

Legal and Welfare Provisions for Elder Protection in India

Constitutional Framework

The Constitution of India (1950) laid the fundamental legal basis for protecting elder abuse in India. Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India affirm the concept of equality before the law and the right to life and personal liberty, which ensures uniform equal protection of laws for senior citizens, thereby safeguarding them from unequal treatment and supports equal access to healthcare, legal remedies, and social welfare schemes while protecting older adults from neglect and all forms of abuse. Article 41 of the Constitution of India under the Directive Principles of State Policy establishes an obligation on the state to provide proactive intervention for the welfare of senior citizens. Article 51A imposes a moral responsibility on families to take care of senior citizens and parents.

Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (2007)

Similarly, *the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (2007)* was enacted during fifty-eight years of the Republic, establishing a legal duty on children, grandchildren, and legal successors to provide maintenance, support, and care to their parents and grandparents, thus promoting the dignity and well-being of older adults. The act also set up Maintenance Tribunals at the district and sub-divisional levels to provide financial assistance to senior citizens.

Section 4 ensures provision for a maintenance allowance of up to ₹10,000 per month for those

who cannot support themselves to cater to the essential support of senior citizens. Section 24 criminalizes the abandonment of senior citizens and empowers authorities to penalize children or relatives responsible for such acts. In addition, Section 23 safeguards senior citizens from economic exploitation by declaring property transfers void if they were made on the condition of providing care and maintenance and the transferee fails to fulfill that obligation.

Welfare Schemes and Programs

Along with this legislation, there were several welfare schemes such as the *Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)* 2021, an umbrella scheme that includes the following schemes: *Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)*, *State Action Plan for Senior Citizens*, *Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)*, *Senior Citizen Opportunities for Productive Engagement*, and *Seniorcare Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE)* for the purpose of providing the basic necessities (food, health care, economic security, and social interaction) for senior citizens; *the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)* 2007; and *the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP)*, intended to provide financial support to elderly people, widows, people with disabilities, and people living in financially vulnerable households, and several other schemes under various ministries framed to promote and secure elderly rights. *The National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE)* 2010 provides medical care services to the older individuals at multiple levels of the state public health care delivery system at primary, secondary, and tertiary health care, including outreach services.

Yet, in reality, there is a significant gap between the statutory provisions and the actual protection afforded to elders of India. The existing statutory law focuses heavily on maintenance (allowance for the elders to have a minimum standard of living) and on protecting the elders from financial abuse but fails to address the other sort of elder mistreatment, which is a severe violation of fundamental rights and civil liberties. This paper reviews the policy and welfare scheme to identify the barriers in the ineffective implementation of legislation and welfare schemes, and it also highlights the importance of shifting the point of view from **Welfare-centric** to **Right-centric** to increase the reach of effectiveness to the elders.

Important Case Laws related to Elder Rights in India

1. Urmila Dixit v. Sunil Sharan Dixit (2025)

In this case, the Supreme Court made it clear that if a child transfers the property of the elders to themselves with an expectation of care and support, they are supposed to take care of the senior citizen under Section 23 of the MWPSA Act, 2007. If the child fails to fulfill this duty to provide care, such transfer will be considered void, and the senior citizen has the right to reclaim their transferred property. This again strengthens the existing protection available to senior citizens under the Act.

2. Kamalakant Mishra v. Additional Collector & Ors. (2025)

In this context, the Supreme Court ensures and protects the rights, welfare, and dignity of senior citizens under the MWPSA Act, 2007. It reaffirmed that maintenance tribunals have the power to order eviction of children who fail to maintain their parents. Also, the court clarified that a child's financial status does not remove their obligation to care for their parents.

3. Dr. Ashwani Kumar v. Union of India & Ors. (2018)

The Supreme Court emphasized that the rights of the elderly under Article 21 of the Constitution of India include the right of elderly individuals to live with dignity, shelter, healthcare, and financial security. The Court identified significant gaps in existing laws—pension schemes, geriatric care, and the enforcement of the MWPSA Act, 2007—even though the Act is meant extensively for the elderly. It also underscored the need for stronger enforcement, increased public awareness, and improved institutional support to ensure effective protection of elderly rights.

4. H.S. Subramanya v. H.S. Lakshmi (2014)

This case reaffirmed the importance of Section 9 for maintenance and the legal obligation of the child to ensure it, even though the amount awarded is limited to ₹10,000. It stresses that the legal limit provides inadequate support by not taking into account the actual needs and income, thereby revealing a major weakness in the act.

Legislative Barriers and Institutional Barriers: A Critical Analysis

Legislative Gaps

➤ A major weakness of the MWPSA Act, 2007, lies in the way its concept and guiding

framework are framed. The primary focus of the act is to ensure financial support for senior citizens, particularly aged parents, from their children and to protect them from fraudulent transfer of property, along with provisions to reclaim it when a breach of trust occurs. Even though the Act mainly emphasizes the financial safety and security of older persons, it seems to overlook various important issues faced by them—such as the wider dimensions of abuse—which remain largely unaddressed. It deals with abuse through the concepts of neglect, failure to maintain, and ill-treatment. However, there are no adequate provisions ensuring penal consequences for perpetrators who inflict physical and non-physical forms of violence on the elderly. This greatly reduces the protective scope of the act, though it is meant to safeguard the overall wellbeing.

- As per the Longitudinal Aging Study in India report, a decade after the act was implemented, only 10 per cent of senior citizens are aware of it (Issac et al., 2021). This points to a clear failure of the system in the implementation of law to the majority of the population, particularly among elderly individuals who are illiterate or living in rural and remote areas. Without adequate legal awareness, elderly victims are unable to seek legal remedies or make use of the provisions of the Act, thereby limiting its overall impact.
- Earlier the act had the problem of ambiguity on the terms defined in the act, such as "maintenance," "welfare," "normal life," and "children," and later the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill in 2019 was proposed but has not yet received approval, reflecting the standard of the law (Malawliya, 2025). It also expands the meaning of "maintenance" and "welfare" to include healthcare, safety, housing, and overall well-being. Further, it removes the ₹10,000 limit on maintenance and gives priority to applications filed by senior citizens aged above 80.
- The act appears gender-neutral in its provisions; however, from the research studies, it is evident that there is consistent gender-based differences in the abuse of elder individuals. In India, gender-based social inequalities are visible across various aspects of society and are reflected here as well. Elderly women are more susceptible to abuse, particularly due to factors such as widowhood, physical weakness, and economic dependence. This indicates a lack of adequate protection mechanisms for elderly women, exposing them disproportionately to abuse.

Procedural and Implementation Barriers

- Although the Maintenance Tribunal is empowered to grant monthly maintenance to senior citizens by their children or relatives, a major gap exists here in the monitoring and enforcement of such orders. Due to the lack of a systematic enforcement and monitoring mechanism, older individuals are put in a position to take independent action of their own to receive compliance, which is often beyond their practical capacity. This enforcement gap significantly reduces the effectiveness and practical value of the legal remedies available to them.
- Section 5(4) mandates the maintenance tribunals to conclude cases within a timeline of 90 days; in some cases, it is extendable by 30 days. But most of the time, procedural delay occurs due to overload work for administrative officers, poor follow-up mechanisms, and frequent non-appearance of respondents (children or relatives); this defeats the purpose of speedy relief.
- Digitalization has created real difficulties for many senior citizens, especially those who are illiterate or unfamiliar with technology. For them, understanding it seems a bit tough, as illiteracy already makes it difficult for elders to understand legal proceedings in Maintenance Tribunals, thereby limiting their ability to pursue their rights and actively participate in hearings. The shift to digital processes, such as e-filing, further increases their exclusion from accessing justice.

Institutional and Systemic Barriers

- For senior citizens, various ministries of both central and state address different schemes introduced in accordance with the need, such as pensions, accommodation or housing assistance, healthcare, and food security. However, the absence of effective coordination leads to gaps in delivering the service to the beneficiaries.
- Lack of staff in the social welfare department leads to the improper reach of welfare schemes to the senior citizen who lives in remote areas and is illiterate, thus reducing the effective implementation.
- Old age homes contribute significantly in society as it becomes the last resort for abandoned, childless, or homeless elders. Unfortunately, several elders are prone to different abuse in

this institution itself affecting standard of living. This shows the poor monitoring and inspection mechanisms as well as the lack of proper national regulatory standards.

Strengthening Elder Protection Policies and Welfare Frameworks in India: A Birds Eye Over View

Legislative Reforms: Moving from Welfare to Rights

- An important reform needed to strengthen the MWPC Act, 2007 is a shift in its basic approach—from a welfare-oriented law to a rights-based framework. This change can be achieved by both amending existing provisions and introducing new legal measures. However, it needs to be reformed to emphasize rights and protection addressing various types of abuse or violence experienced by older adults. Such reforms are necessary to recognize the full range of elder abuse more effectively. At present, the act mainly focuses on issues like abandonment and property transfer, which, although important, do not cover many other forms of abuse. As a result, a large number of elderly persons are left without proper legal protection or remedies.
- Despite the socio-economic conditions of the society has occurred largely, the maximum maintenance amount fixed under Section 4 has remained unchanged since 2007 and there is no increase in amount. The previously suggested sum of ₹10,000 is no longer sufficient to meet the rising costs of living, healthcare, and elder care. Therefore, there is a clear need to increase this amount.
- Separate legal provisions for the protection of elderly women are needed to be added and it should specifically address the marginalization arising from economic dependency, illegal transfer of property, widowhood of elderly women. Provisions such as priority access to legal aid, shelter and pension for elderly women who are the most vulnerable victims of abuse should be clearly codified in law.

Institutional Strengthening: Towards a National Elder Protection Commission

- Currently, India relies on the National Council of Senior Citizens, an advisory body established under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, to provide guidance on elder protection policy. This body lacks power such as enforcement of laws and the institutional capacity to monitor, investigate, and address elder abuse at the national level.

The establishment of a National Commission for Elder Protection, similar to the National Human Rights Commission or the National Commission for Women. The establishment of such a commission helps the statutory authority to receive and investigate complaints of elder abuse, to conduct suo motu investigations in violations of elder rights and to issue recommendations to state governments and other bodies.

- Across the nation, state, and district levels, Elder Protection Cells should be established with dedicated staff, which includes social workers, legal officers, psychologists, and health professionals with specific training in elder care and elder rights. Integrating these service models helps to act as one-stop service centres for senior citizens and their families, providing necessary information, legal assistance, access to social welfare schemes and crisis intervention.

Specialized Law Enforcement: Elder-Sensitive Policing

- A few states in India have undertaken police-based initiatives to protect senior citizens. States like Delhi, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, along with a few others, introduced various police-based initiatives to protect the senior citizens, such as Senior Citizen Cells, community policing programs, and support systems. But these initiatives are fragmented and not implemented uniformly across the country. Establish a special law enforcement unit for senior citizens at the district and city levels of states and union territories with proper operational guidelines, rules, and periodic compliance reviews. Also, they must be given some age-sensitive training to handle the case, especially trauma-informed communication, and identify the victims and pain of victimization. Moreover, it is important to have awareness of relevant legal provisions and coordination with multiple agencies for collaborative work.
- Police authorities should maintain an updated record of senior citizens living within their jurisdiction, particularly those living alone, with functional disabilities, and at high risk of abuse. Regular patrolling in areas with a high elderly population and periodic surprise visits to residences can help monitor their safety and well-being.

Maintenance Tribunal Reform: Making Justice Accessible

- The maintenance tribunal system is the legal forum where maintenance for senior citizens

is provided. There is evidence stating procedural delays and the ineffective working of tribunals. For the effective functioning of tribunals, panels should be mandated, requiring the inclusion of a social worker, a psychologist or counsellor, and a legal officer alongside the presiding officer. This inclusion helps to recognize and deal with elder disputes in a wider way by addressing legal, social, and psychological dimensions, making it a more extensive approach to achieve a comprehensive impact on elders' issues.

- Second, the use of videoconferencing technology for hearings should be promoted to reduce the burden of physical presence of elderly claimants. This procedural accommodation should be resourced to enable elders who are physically unable to travel to participate in proceedings from their residence itself. Along with this, timelines for case completion and strict accountability mechanisms for officers should be established.
- Third, it is important for elderly claimants to have a mechanism for monitoring compliance with maintenance orders. This mechanism can be established within the social welfare department, responsible for tracking whether orders are being complied with and for initiating enforcement action when they are not.

Social Welfare and Community Support: Preventing Abuse Before It Occurs

- The most practical way to reduce elder abuse is prevention. The community can lend a big helping hand to prevent the abuse through the sustained effort in providing support and caregiver assistance. Mandatory setting up two or three daycare centres based on necessity or population, along with short-term residential care and home-care assistants, can provide relief for caregivers, significantly decreasing the chances of neglect and abandonment. Daycare centres for elderly persons represent one of the most effective preventive interventions, which provides the structured activities, social engagement, health monitoring, and nutritional support during daytime hours when working caregivers are absent. Short-term and emergency residential care facilities should also be expanded to provide relief for caregivers at risk of burnout and to serve as safe alternatives for elders facing acute safety risks in their homes.
- Home-based care services should be strengthened by including services such as periodic visits from trained health workers and social welfare officers in collaboration with local governance. These visits can be scheduled in a systematic way to reach elderly persons in

their homes, particularly those living alone or in remote areas, while keeping the cost more affordable for the needy. These services serve a dual purpose: providing health monitoring and practical assistance, and creating opportunities to identify signs of abuse or neglect or to identify any signs indicating victimization.

- One of the major reasons for elder abuse is the exhaustion of the caregiver. It mostly occurs due to economic stress, work stress, inadequate knowledge of the caregiver, and sometimes family conflicts. In order to reduce this, providing caregiver support services is essential. Giving financial assistance and setting up day care centres can largely reduce the burden of caregiving for the caregivers and typically leads to a reduction in the risk of abuse. However, adding to this, family support and initiatives such as educational programs for the community increase the sensitization and awareness of the community regarding the difficulties of elderhood, rights of elderly individuals, the signs of elder abuse or mistreatment, and the available services and mechanisms. These initiatives help to take proactive measures rather than reactive ones.

Economic Security and Social Inclusion

- The financial dependency of elderly persons, particularly elderly women, is a great cause of elder abuse. Elders who lack independent income are reliant on family members for their most essential needs, and this dependency gradually leads to power imbalances and eventually leads to abuse. In order to curb these situations, the introduction of a free government-issued card to provide subsidized access to elders who are childless, homeless, and abandoned, as well as those who belong to the below poverty line category or who cannot afford their basic expenses such as healthcare, transportation, and essential services, would significantly reduce abuse.
- For the promotion of active aging and as part of social inclusion, it is important to provide opportunities that enhance the well-being and dignity of older adults. Financial security can be improved through part-time employment opportunities for those who are able and willing to engage in such activities. Moreover, providing skill development and digital literacy programs and volunteering programs contributes to the physical and psychological health of elderly persons and reinforces the feeling of purpose in life. In accordance with Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy concerning the right to work, it is necessary for the government and NGO agencies to create part-time job opportunities for seniors who

are able to work and provide training to enhance their digital skills, which will boost the social engagement and self-worth of the elders.

- Community members should volunteer for activities such as yoga, arts and crafts, reading groups, storytelling circles, and other events that promote active aging among elders. The benefits of these initiatives address age-related issues like loneliness, social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline in older individuals. Moreover, the coordination of younger communities in volunteering for such initiatives enhances intergenerational engagement and also fosters community-level involvement in supporting the elderly.

Regulation of Elder Care Institutions

- Prioritizing elderly well-being living in old age homes should be given equal importance, like giving importance to the elderly living with their families. This strategy helps to ensure the safety of the elderly residing in both old age facilities and institutional settings. Establishing a countrywide regulatory framework is mandatory to ensure the safeguarding of the elderly residing in old-age homes and other institutional care settings. For that purpose, the regulatory framework should incorporate mandatory licensing of the institutions, qualified and trained staff, a proportionate staffing ratio, adequate dietary requirements, availability of healthcare, and the implementation of social and recreational activities.
- Establish necessary regulations and protocols for staff registration and permits. Background checks for caregivers, training should be given for elder care, qualified nursing staff or individuals with equivalent education must be available to provide care for senior citizens. Regular and unannounced inspection and evaluations by authorized officers in the institution are necessary to address grievances and to ensure an appropriate staffing ratio
- The *Poshan Abhiyan for the Elderly* under the *National Action Plan for Senior Citizens (NAPSrC)* focuses on addressing malnourishment among senior citizens, but it does not extend to those who are residents of old age homes. Extending nutritional support to old age homes would help address malnourishment caused by overcrowding, poor food quality, and limited funding coupled with nutritional screening during health appointments.

Conclusion

For the effective implementation of elder protection, it's important to think beyond suggesting ideas and designing policies just for the sake of elderly individuals. Instead, authorities should focus on how these measures actually work in real life. Elder protection can be brought into service in two ways. The first approach is the welfare-oriented approach. The problem with adopting this approach is that the government frames policies that are often based on administrative convenience, which makes older persons dependent beneficiaries of government support rather than addressing the real needs of the elderly. Thus, the functional efficiency of the schemes gets affected and fails to uphold the dignity, safety, and overall well-being of elder individuals and make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Conversely, a rights-based framework should be designed to treat elderly persons as individuals with dignity and rights. It recognizes them as active stakeholders rather than passive beneficiaries. Policies developed in this way aim to address the root causes of problems and include lifetime solutions, especially in areas like financial security, healthcare, and social inclusion, where elders seem more marginalized. This approach not only helps prevent abuse but also supports older persons in living with independence, self-respect, and a sense of control over their lives.

Moreover, regardless of the approach, proper organization, collective action, and the inclusion of agencies such as law enforcement, the judiciary, and social welfare are much needed for proactive action and effective implementation of the MWPS Act and schemes. Furthermore, official authorities and boards and strong community support systems are vital to reduce abuse and victimization. A holistic and integrated policy approach that combines legal protection, social support, and preventive strategies will ensure that elders live with dignity, security, and respect and remain happy with good well-being within society.

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