Hanyang Model United Nations VI Chair Report



**Committee: UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) Chairs: Jooyoung Han, Inseo Baek**

**Agenda: Devising measures to restrain elder abuse in an aging society**

1. **Committee Introduction**

UNHRC stands for The United Nations Human Rights Council and was established in 2006. UNHRC is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners, and people to promote and raise awareness about global human rights issues. It serves as a platform for international cooperation and dialogue on matters related to human rights and contributes to the development of international norms and standards in this area. However, like any international body, it also faces challenges and criticism, particularly regarding its

effectiveness and the political dynamics that can influence its decisions.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was established in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, which had faced criticism for its effectiveness and credibility. It is “headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world (United Nations, n.d.)”.

UNHRC supports The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). UDHR represents a “pivotal milestone in the evolution of human rights (OHCHR, n.d.)”. For the very first time, it “articulated a comprehensive framework of fundamental human rights that were to be safeguarded and upheld universally (OHCHR, n.d.)”.

The UDHR's significance is deeply rooted in its inclusive genesis (OHCHR, n.d.), as it emerged from the collaborative efforts of representatives from all corners of the world. This historic declaration stands as a testament to the shared commitment of nations to ensure the protection of essential human rights, transcending borders, legal systems, and cultural boundaries in its pursuit of a more just and equitable world. (OHCHR, n.d.)

# Agenda Background

Abuse of older people is a crucial issue all around the world. A 2017 review of 52 studies in 28 countries from diverse regions estimated that “over the past year, 1 in 6 people (15.7%) aged 60 years and older were subjected to some form of abuse (WHO, n.d.)” (See Table 1).



*Table 1. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses (WHO, n.d.)*

In 2017, “a study that combined the most comprehensive available data from 52 studies across 28 countries, encompassing a diverse range of regions, including 12 nations with lower and middle-income economies, estimated that approximately 15.7% of individuals aged 60 and above experienced some form of abuse within the past year (NHAC, 2019)”. It's important to note that this estimate is likely conservative because only 1 out of 24 cases of elder abuse is typically reported. This underreporting occurs partly because older individuals often fear reporting instances of abuse to their family, friends, or authorities. Consequently, prevalence rates are expected to be lower than the actual figures.

While the availability of data is limited, the UN offers compiled prevalence estimates concerning the number of older people affected by various types of abuse (See Table 2).

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| --- | --- |
| **Types of Elder Abuse** | **Percentage** |
| Psychological abuse | 11.6% |
| Financial abuse | 6.8% |
| Neglect | 4.2% |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Physical abuse | 2.6% |
| Sexual abuse | 0.9% |

*Table 2. Pooled prevalence estimates of number of older people affected by different types of abuse (United Nations, n.d.)*

Through the study conducted by PubMed Central, international prevalence rates according to elder abuse types were determined. (See Graph 1)



*Graph 1. International prevalence rates according to elder abuse type.*

There are three general types of elder abuse: physical, neglect, and financial exploitation. The first type, physical abuse, results in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment to a senior citizen (NHAC, 2019). It can come from various sources, for example, another elder, nursing staff, caregiver, or even a family member or friend. The second type, neglect, results when an older adult, typically someone aged 60 or older, is “subjected to inadequate care or attention, leading to harm or the risk of harm to their physical or psychological well-being (NHAC, 2019)”. No one wants to be left alone when they are on their own. Psychotropic drugs are chemical restraints that are commonly misused. Older people are still loved ones, so they shouldn’t be neglected by others and result in pressure sores or other types of elder neglect. The third type, financial exploitation, involves the unauthorized or improper use of an elderly person's financial resources, assets, or property, often without their consent. It can “include misappropriation of funds, theft, or exploitation (Yon, 2017)”. Examples of financial

abuse are numerous, but usually seen may come from hurried caregivers’ scams or even family members themselves.

On a global scale, cases of elder abuse are anticipated to rise due to the rapidly aging populations in many countries, coupled with potential resource limitations that may hinder the fulfillment of their needs. Projections suggest that “by 2050, the worldwide population of individuals aged 60 and above will more than double, increasing from 900 million in 2015 to approximately 2 billion, with the majority residing in low- and middle-income nations (United Nations, n.d.)”. If the proportion of elder abuse victims remains constant, the number of victims is set to surge significantly due to population aging, reaching an estimated 320 million victims by 2050 (Garcia & Artigliere, 2023).

An aging society and elder abuse can have significant and huge effects on a generation as a whole. As the population ages, there is an increased demand for healthcare services, pensions, and social supports, which lends to strain public resources and social safety nets, potentially leading to higher taxes or a burden on younger generations to support the elderly population. Additionally, an aging society could lead to shrinking workforce, which may result in labor shortages and decreased economic productivity. Furthermore, an increased aging population can lead to shifts in family members, with more families facing the challenges of caring for aging parents or relatives, which can impact family dynamics and financial stability.

Addressing elder abuse requires legal and social resources, including investigations, legal proceedings, and support services for victims. This could result in government resources and potentially increasing costs of them. Moreover, elder abuse might destroy trust and security in society. When older individuals fear abuse or neglect, it can lead to social isolation, depression, and a diminished sense of wellbeing. Since family members and caregivers are responsible for the

well-being of older adults, they might experience increased stress or burnout, which leads to ripple effects on their own health and balance of their work and life. Due to several reasons, elder abuse is an essential topic to discuss.

# United States of America (USA)

According to the National Council of Aging (NCA), the number of older Americans who are abused is approximately counted as below:

Approximately one in 10 Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of elder abuse. Some estimates range as high as five million elders who are abused each year. One study estimated that only one in 24 cases of abuse are reported to authorities. (NCA, 2021)

1. China

Research revealed that elder abuse and its types are shared among the global Chinese population: with prevalence ranging from 0.2% to 64%. Younger age, lower income levels, depression, cognitive impairment, and lack of social support were consistently associated with self-reported elder abuse. Caregiver burden was a constant risk factor for the proclivity to elder abuse by caregivers. The adverse health outcomes of elder abuse included suicidal ideation and psychological stress. Some primary research gaps exist: such as lack of consistency in measurements and recall periods, insufficient studies on the causal relationships between potential risk factors and elder abuse, consequences of elder abuse, and possible interventions. In order to reduce the risk of elder abuse in the global Chinese population, collaboration is encouraged among researchers, healthcare professionals, social service providers, and policymakers. (Dong X, 2015)

Elder abuse is a significant public health issue that affects a wide range of people, but a grasp of the intricate cultural and social aspects related to this problem among the diverse global Chinese population is limited. To address this gap, it is crucial that the society undertake comprehensive,

long-term research that accurately represents this community. Given the considerable diversity within the Chinese population, it is essential to conduct both national and international studies to gather detailed information about the experiences of elder abuse among older individuals. By taking into account the cultural, social, and community factors that affect their well-being, we can improve the effectiveness of efforts to prevent, intervene in, detect, and report elder abuse within the global Chinese aging population. This approach will have a positive impact on both the implementation of effective practices and the development of policies addressing this issue.

# Republic of Korea (ROK)

According to the annual report of the Korean Elder Protection Agency (2020), “the number of elder abuse cases increased from 5,188 in 2018 to 5,243 in 2019, rising significantly to 6,259 cases in 2020 (Son & Cho, 2022)”. ROK faced a strong increase in the number of elder abuses during COVID-19 (Statistics Korea, 2020), and the necessity of more active health promotion programs and healthy aging policies has been discovered by several groups.

Furthermore, “efforts for policy change and practice interventions that can widen support resources and networks for older adults and promote positive interactions and functioning between family members and older adults” are recommended (Jeon & Kong, 2022).

# Previous Actions

* 1. **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**

Elder abuse prevention has shown promising progress through increased awareness, knowledge dissemination, and concerted actions. Nonetheless, the imperative for further efforts remains evident. International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) designated 15 June as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2006, and “recognized as a United Nations Day by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/66/127 adopted in 2011 (United Nations, n.d.)”. This significant step was not merely a symbolic gesture but also reflected a growing global commitment to address this issue comprehensively.

The collaboration between organizations like INPEA and the United Nations highlights the significance of elder abuse as a global concern. It singles out the need for ongoing efforts to address this issue effectively, and emphasizes the importance of sustained awareness, education, and action on a global scale. This recognition serves as a reminder that elder abuse prevention is a shared responsibility that should be taken to protect the elderly from abuse and neglect.

# United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides a foundational framework for the protection of human rights, including the rights of older individuals. In part of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, while not exclusively focused on elder abuse, it recognizes the rights of people with disabilities, who may be vulnerable to abuse and neglect, including older individuals with disabilities. With specific explanation and clarification about human rights of older people, the society is trying to improve the environment and living conditions for elders.

# Open-Ended Working Group on Aging

Moreover, the United Nations has established an Open-Ended Working Group on Aging to examine the rights and needs of older persons and address issues like elder abuse. This working group provides a platform for discussing and developing strategies to prevent abuse of older individuals. These past solutions and initiatives show the United Nations’ commitment to address elder abuse as a global concern and to promote the rights and well-being of older individuals. While these actions are meaningful, ongoing efforts are needed to further prevent elder abuse, protect the rights of older persons, and promote their dignity and well-being on a global perspective.

# Possible Solutions

The issue of elder abuse is not confined to individual stakeholders, but is rather a structural problem that must be collectively solved at a societal, national matter. Luckily enough, elder abuse is preventable, for which there must be specifically catered actions done by every stakeholder, with assistance and overwatch from this committee.

# The Public

Public awareness about the issue and its gravity is imperative, as it is members of the general public that can actively prevent and watch for signs of elder abuse. Learning how to get help and report abuse, with more education, campaigns and events for sharing information about elder abuse prevention could reach out help for all people who need help. This could result in helping ensure that older people live in safety – without fear of being hurt, exploited, or neglected. The execution of this scheme cannot be done solely by the committee, however, due to its limit in resources and local outreach. The assistance of local administrative bureaus and non-governmental, non-profit organizations is much needed in order for projects to reach their intended targets.

# Local Administration

Local Administration is also part of the general solution that the committee should consider. Apart from raising public awareness mentioned above, respective branches of government and local agencies must be able to procure much needed monetary, material, and human resources necessary to vulnerable individuals, in this case the elderly population.

# Special Rapporteurs

All of the solutions mentioned above should be carefully monitored with its progress extensively reported to the UNHRC, because many of the projects are focused on a long-term improvement on the status quo rather than immediate alleviation. To evaluate the projects and solutions outlined by this committee independently and objectively, the installation of special rapporteurs on the issue of elderly abuse is highly recommended. They can assist the committee as in assessing the problem within the target region primarily, finding out any structural flaws and/or grey areas, and review the efficiency and efficacy of resource allocation to projects and campaigns.

# Defining of Key Words

* 1. Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): Routine activities that people perform on a daily basis without needing assistance, such as eating, walking, bathing, dressing, and toileting.
	2. Adult Protective Services (APS): A state agency that helps elderly persons and dependent adults under the age of 65 who are unable to meet their needs or have been subjected to abuse.
	3. Bedsore: Injuries to the skin and underlying tissue resulting from prolonged pressure. Also called pressure sores or pressure ulcers, this condition often forms on bony areas due to contact with another surface.
	4. Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act (EADACPA): The EADACPA covers physical abuse, neglect, financial abuse, abandonment, isolation, abduction, or other treatment resulting in physical harm, pain or mental suffering.
	5. Elder at Risk (EAR): Any person who is 60 years of age or older who has experienced, is experiencing or is at risk of being subjected to elder abuse.
	6. Elder Law: An area of legal practice that places emphasis on those issues that affect the aging population.

# Key Questions

1. Discover the previous initiatives taken within the own country to prevent elder abuse. How have these actions evolved or advanced over time?
2. What are the legal and regulatory frameworks of each country to prevent elder abuse?
3. What measures could enhance awareness and education?
4. How can reporting and response mechanisms be strengthened?

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