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Elder Abuse in the European Union

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ELDER ABUSE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



By: Anna Burr, Shay Garland, David Simic, Sarah Ingram,
and Brooke Jacobs

PERSONAL TESTIMONY



WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE EXACTLY?

“A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.”

- World Health Organization

GLOBAL AGING

“The number of older persons — those aged 60 years or over — is expected to more than double by 2050 and to more than triple by 2100, rising from 962 million globally in 2017 to 2.1 billion in 2050 and 3.1 billion in 2100.”

- World Population Prospects: the 2017 Revision

WHY EUROPE?

“nearly half of those surveyed consider maltreatment, neglect and even abuse of older people to be widespread in their country. 67% felt that older people are financially exploited and receive inadequate care, and most felt that this vulnerable group is at risk of mental and physical abuse.”

- UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

53%

of family caregivers reported at least one incident of maltreatment towards their care-dependent family member in a period of 12 months

30%

of older people dying from homicide each year in the European Region is due to elder maltreatment

70%

of the perpetrators of abuse are members of the family or of the close environment of the older person



OVERVIEW

- 1) FORMS OF ELDER ABUSE
- 2) ELDER ABUSE IN GERMANY - CASE STUDY
- 3) ELDER ABUSE IN GREECE - CASE STUDY
- 4) WHAT CAN WE BE DOING?

The Risk Factors and Forms of Elder Abuse in a European Context

Based off our definition, and according to many articles, we are breaking elder abuse into five categories.

World Health Organization (2008)

Elder abuse risk factors among caregivers

Families or friends who
provide care to the elderly
family members



Institutions or community
homes



Elder abuse in the form of **physical** abuse

““ The infliction of pain or injury, physical coercion, physical/chemical restraint””

Elder abuse in the form of **sexual** abuse

“Non-consensual contact of
any kind with an older
person”

- Van Bavel, et. al., (2010)

Elder abuse in the form of **psychological** abuse

“The infliction of mental
anguish”

- Van Bavel, et. al., (2010)

Elder abuse in the form of **financial and material** abuse

“The illegal or improper exploitation and/or use of funds or resources”

- Van Bavel, et. al., (2010)

Elder abuse in the form of **neglect**

“Intentional or unintentional refusal or failure to fulfill a care-taking obligation”

Elder Abuse in Germany



Brief Overview

- Was once an invisible problem, but is gaining awareness and magnitude as time goes on and the aged population expands.
- According to ABUEL (Abuse and Health Among Elderly in Europe), most common form of elder abuse is psychological with 27.1% of the elderly population affected.
- Most likely perpetrator of psychological and physical abuse is the spouse at 34.8% and 33.7%.
- Friends and acquaintances were the most likely to inflict sexual abuse at 30.3%.
- Finally, “Others” were most likely to be responsible for financial abuse with 61.7%.

Gender Differences

- Both genders experienced different kinds of elder abuse at varying levels
- Men were more likely to suffer from:
 - Psychological (20.0% vs. 18.9%)
 - Physical (2.8% vs. 2.6%)
 - Financial (4.1% vs. 3.7%)
- Women were more likely to suffer from:
 - Sexual (1% v. 0.3%)

Cultural Considerations

- Individualist
- Nuclear family systems
- “Pragmatic” orientation

“This seems also to be true for relatives who want to complain for their family member; many of them said in surveys, that they fear a deterioration of the situation after complaining.”

- Dr. Claudia Mahler

Macro Considerations & Response

- Potential growing abuse as time goes on
- One source is a struggling healthcare system
- Healthcare spending is increasing as the population continues to age and suffer from more health problems.
- No near-term solution to finding issues due on-going budget struggles due to the Syrian migrant crisis, BREXIT, and a new weak government.
- No national adult services, but local states have established hotlines and visitor services. Care homes are monitored by the MDK. (Medizinischer Dienst der Krankenkassen)

Elder Abuse in Greece

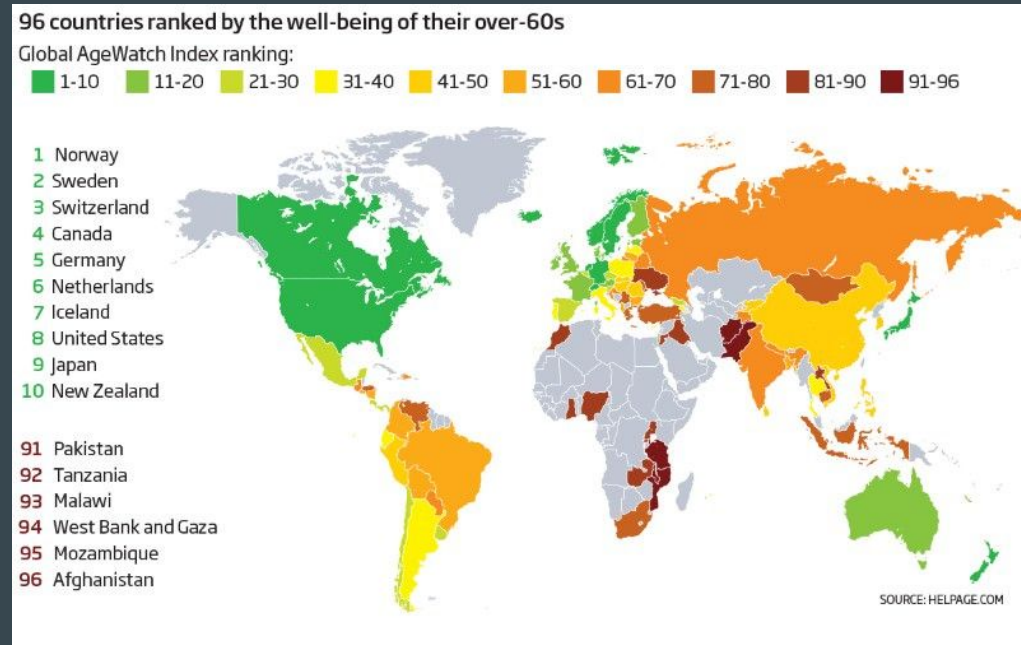
[Video](#)



Statistics on Elder Abuse in Greece

- Increase in ageing population (60+)
- Gender differences
- Potential support ratio

Global Age Watch Index
79th of 96 countries



Cultural Considerations

- Collectivism
- Extended family systems
- “Familistic” cultural traditions

“...the majority of older adult’s abuse and neglect in Greece probably takes place within the domestic environment.”

-Ferreira-Alves & Santos, 2009, p.6

Responses to Elder Abuse in Greece

- Centers Open for the Protection of the Elderly
- “Help at Home”
- Elderly Day Care Centres
- SOS 1065 National Telephone Line
- October 1st as the day of the elderly
- Camping and spa programs for the elderly



Where do we go from here?

1. Where did we begin?

2. What did we learn?

3. How can we effectively combat elder abuse?

4. Why does elder abuse in the European Union matter to us in the US?

Where did we begin?

- Preconceived notions of what Elder Abuse looks like
- Learned about Global Aging and the increase the population will have in the next 32 years.
- Heard a personal story about Elaine.

“A single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.”

- *World Health Organization*

What did we learn?

- The different types of abuse: physical, sexual, psychological, financial & material, and neglect
- Elder Abuse looks different for each gender.
- There may be cultural barriers to the overarching issue of the Elder Abuse conversation taking place.

“Although Europe-wide elder abuse is believed to happen fairly often perceptions on elder abuse differ between countries. This again underlines that elder abuse must be viewed in the light of the social and cultural backgrounds.”

- Van Bavel, M., Janssens, K.,
Schakenraad, W., & Thurlings, N.
(Elder abuse in Europe: background and
position paper.)

Effective ways to combat Elder Abuse

- Implement Blumer's Model of Social Problems in order to understand the process. (steps on the right)
- Caregiver Intervention (housekeeping, meal preparation)
- Educate the general public, and family members of the aging population on the warning signs of abuse.
- Create laws against mistreatment of the aging and vulnerable.

Blumer's model of social problems:

— emergence of a problem;

*— legitimization of the problem; —
mobilization of action;*

*— formulation of an official plan; —
implementation of the plan.*

Why does Elder Abuse in the EU Matter to Me in the US?

“Elder abuse is not just a problem of old age, it is a problem that concerns people of all ages, as all hope to grow old”

- European Commission (under the Daphne III funding program)

How can I help?

- #YearsAhead
 - Photos can often break down stereotypes.
 - Each photo should include a short description, including where it was taken.
- Have patience and compassion on our elders.
- Show compassion to the caretakers.
- Promote an age friendly environment.
- Continue the culturally specific research.
- June 15th- UN Elder Abuse Awareness day.
- October 1st- International Day of Older Persons.



Photo submitted by M. Schneiders.

Any Questions?

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