



A Study on the Prevalence of Elderly Abuse – A Case Study of Mwanjema Community, Lilongwe- Malawi

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ABSTRACT

Experiences of older person in Malawi have not been extensively explored despite evidence on abuse of older people and the growth of their population globally. This study assessed witchcraft beliefs and the psychological well-being among the elderly in Mwanjema- Lilongwe. The research objectives were four: to identify the prevalence of Witchcraft Beliefs. To assess on the factors that contributes to elderly abuse. To find out the prevalence of elderly abuse in Malawi. To understand why aging is associated with witchcraft and the psychological well-being. To assess on the factors that influence elderly abuse in Malawi. The study used a simple random sampling to select samples for the study. The study had 164 respondents as its sample size. There were a total of 173 samples. Two research instruments were used. Questionnaires and interviewing techniques were used as the instruments. SPSS was used for correlational analysis, while content analysis was used for qualitative data. The findings on the study of the prevalence of elderly abuse “People belief in Witchcraft” The results indicate that on strongly agreed, this suggests that the majority of senior citizens believe witchcraft. The second was “Beliefs in witchcraft have interfered with relationships in the community” The results indicate that on strongly agreed and this implies that a quite number of the elderly people belief in witchcraft within the study area and have interfered with relationships in the community. The third aspect was “Witchcraft practices are dangerous in the community” respondents strongly agreed. The findings implies that majority of the elderly people agreed that witchcraft practices are dangerous in the community and that ageism has contributed highly to elderly abuse. On possible interventions were availability of multidisciplinary committees. Second that churches to work hard with the elderly persons affected. Third availability of cash management programs and lastly availability of caregivers.

The implications of this study is that selection of the study area was chosen considering the constraints of time, accessibility and resources. Witchcraft beliefs itself is wide spread in the entire Lilongwe region, therefore, it will be unrealistic of this research with its nature to be able to address the entire region of Mwanjema community. This research was confined to one village community development among other surrounding communities.

KEYWORDS: Prevalence Elderly Abuse, factors, communities, psychological, wellbeing, Lilongwe, Malawi

I. INTRODUCTION

Across the Malawi, the population of older people is increasing and those aged 60 years and above will be above 7 million by 2050. One in every six older people aged 60 years and above has suffered at least one form of abuse in their lifetime and their population is becoming more susceptible to various forms of abuse. By 2040, an estimate of 3 million older people would have been victims of elder abuse. There are no time and contextual boundaries to the possible occurrence of elder abuse. By definition, elder abuse is conceptualized as “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”. (WHO in 2019) From this conception, elder abuse is a social phenomenon that can occur in family relationships, therapeutic interactions, institutional homes, and communities. Nonetheless, whether in communities or institutions, five common types of elder abuse exist in Malawi and they are: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and neglect. The various types of elder abuse have been reported in different studies among older people in communities and institutional homes, which makes scary especially in rural areas, where they are likely to suffer one form of elder abuse in their lifetime and witchcraft beliefs are inherent aspect of human existence; they have been encountered by people from many different cultures



and geographical locations. This has frequently been demonstrated to be one of the causes of disturbances to peoples' psychological well-being and this has resulted into depression, anxiety, fear and death among people regardless of their gender, class, or age.

II. RESEARCH GAP

Despite the commendable studies that have been done on witchcraft beliefs in the past, there are certain limitations that the current study strives to address. The gaps noted by the current study include the following: From the early studies that have been conducted conflicting findings have been identified. A lot of generalizations in addressing the impact on witchcraft beliefs have been identified. The current study aimed at addressing these factors in order to contribute to the growing discourse on this subject. Early studies tend to rely on either quantitative or qualitative paradigms of research separately. Each of these paradigms, used separately, has limitations; for instance, it is very difficult to use qualitative data alone may not be validated, generalized, or test significance of variation in certain constructs under study. On the other hand, quantitative data alone may not be able to obtain subjective meaning of patterns revealed by figures. The approach also tends to generalize findings without regard to individual and cultural differences. The current study combined both paradigms in a single study to complement each other and bring out a holistic picture of witchcraft beliefs through the use of convergent parallel research design.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of elderly abuse and types of elderly abuse

“Elder abuse is 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.” (WHO 2008). Abuse can range from what might clearly constitute a criminal offence, e.g. sexual or physical abuse, theft, etc., to acts that cause harm to an older person whether by omission or otherwise, e.g. neglect through lack of resources or difficulties with interpersonal relationships. Abuse and neglect have been distinguished depending on whether or not there has been an active violation of rights or an absence of action.

Physical abuse

Violent action or brutality causing harm, physical pain or malaise, including hitting, slapping

or pushing, inappropriate restraint or misuse of medication. Includes any use of power or force which results in physical injury, physical pain, or physical handicap. The behaviors like kicking, biting, pushing, shaking, slapping, pulling, pinching, and burning. In addition, taking inappropriate medicines, physical prohibition, and force in eating and physical punishment are among the types of physical abuse.

Psychological abuse (including emotional, mental, verbal abuse)

Actions inflicting mental pain, anguish or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts, including abusive language, manipulation, bullying, threats, humiliation or isolation. Verbal or non-verbal imposition of mental pressure which may include verbal assault, insult, threat, intimidation, humiliation, harassment, elderly childish behavior, and the isolation of the elderly.

Sexual abuse

Non-consensual physical contact such as unwanted touching or kissing. Sexual contact with anybody without his consent is known as sexual abuse and includes unwanted touching or any kind of sexual beating such as rape, homosexuality, being forced to get naked, and the display of sexual photos (18). Sexual contact with any disabled person without consent constitutes is known as sexual abuse.

Financial/material abuse

Use of money or goods without consent and to the disadvantage of an older person, including theft of money or goods, pressure in connection with wills and inheritance, as well as an abusive utilization of power of attorney. The illegal or inappropriate use of money, property, and stuff of an elderly person which may involve the use of money without permission, forged signatures, inappropriate use or theft of property, forcing the elderly to sign a document and the inappropriate use of guardianship or attorney.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Witchcraft beliefs are a phenomenon that has spread throughout the entire central region population. The study area that was chosen for this work is a true presentation of the other parts of the region in the Lilongwe- central region at large. The selection of the study area was chosen considering



the constraints of time, accessibility and resources. Witchcraft beliefs itself is wide spread in the entire central region, therefore, it will be unrealistic of this research with its nature to be able to address the entire region of Lilongwe community. This research was confined to one community among many communities in Lilongwe. The other communities omitted from this study are equally significant and can be taken into consideration in further studies.

V. Objectives of the study

5.1 Main objective

To assess on the factors towards the high prevalence of elderly abuse in Lilongwe

5.2 Specific objectives

1. To find out the prevalence of elderly abuse in Malawi.
2. To understand why aging is associated with witchcraft.
3. To navigate on the factors that has contributed to elderly abuse in Malawi.
4. To assess on the factors that influence elderly abuse in Malawi

a. Research questions

1. How common is elder abuse in society?
2. Does Malawi have domestic abuse risk assessment tool?
3. Why is aging associated with witchcraft in African countries?
4. What are some factors that have contributed to the growing problem of elderly abuse in Malawi?
5. What influence factor among abuse in elderly is increasing in Malawi?

VI. METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design and approach

Research design is Explanatory Sequential design in mixed method; it is the least time consuming and most well-known of the basic and advanced mixed methods procedures. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies was used to increase the validity of the results. After careful consideration, the researcher used this study design. The researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data, separately evaluates them, and then were compared the findings to determine if they were verified or disagreed with one another, according to (Creswell, 2014).

6.2 Study Population

The study population comprised of elderly male and female living in group Mwanjema from the 29 villages whose ages are from 60 years and above.

For proper identification of this study population, the researcher will use the elderly who is on cash transfer programs from the government of Malawi. From the social-welfare services office of district council those who have attained the age of receiving cash transfer from the government in Mwanjema are 208.

a. Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used simple random sampling which was appropriate. The researcher used primary and secondary data for the study. Interviews served as the initial instrument. The researcher will employed semi-structured interviews and the second instrument was a standardized questionnaire which also involved Hwalek-Sengstock elderly abuse screening test for the respondents. The researcher realized that this tool was developed specifically to evaluate the negligence due to an intentional or unintentional failure to meet the social, physical or emotional needs of an older adult which takes in many forms including physical, emotional financial and sexual abuse as well self-neglect where there is no perpetrator. There were 280 people in the group Mwanjema that are part of the study. The researcher applied the Yamane Taro sample size calculation formula of arrive at the working sample size. Israel (2013) claims that Taro Yamane's (1967) sampling method offers a more straightforward technique to determine sample sizes.

The sample size for quantitative data was 164 respondents. In addition, the researcher interviewed the some of elders according to villages' headmen. Using purpose sampling in qualitative data collection the researcher will select the elders from the 29 villages under group mwanjema who are 70 years and above. Thus, the sample size for qualitative data will be 9 respondents. The total sample size used was 173 respondents.

VII. Research Findings, Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Prevalence of Witchcraft Beliefs

Based on the findings of this study, there was an indication that the majority of the elderly people in Mwanjema-Lilongwe, Malawi on how the belief in witchcraft have affected their lives. There were five aspects on the prevalence of witchcraft Beliefs. From the first aspect, "People belief in Witchcraft" The results indicated and suggested that the majority of senior citizens practice and believe witchcraft. The second aspect was "Beliefs in witchcraft have interfered with relationships in the



community”. This implied that a quite number of the elderly people believe in witchcraft within the study area and have interfered with relationships in the community. The third aspect was “Witchcraft practices are dangerous in the community”. The findings implied that majority of the elderly people agreed that witchcraft practices are dangerous in the community compared to the few who disagreed with the statement. From the Fourth aspect “Witchcraft practices are feared within the community”. These findings revealed that many elderly people agree that there are a lot of fears when it comes to witchcraft practices. This study revealed that witchcraft beliefs have made individuals to be reluctant in cooperating and aiding one another due to witchcraft-related worries. The fifth aspect was “Ageism has contributed to elderly abuse”. The findings imply that majority of the respondents agreed that ageism has contributed highly to elderly abuse.

7.2 The factors that contribute to elderly abuse

7.2.1 Physically abused

On the statement “physical abuse threatened by knife”. The findings implied that majority of the respondents agreed that threatened by knife has contributed highly to elderly abuse. On the statement “physically harmed”. The findings implied that majority of the respondents disagreed that are physically harmed has contributed highly to elderly abuse. On the statement “physically abused by hitting, pushing, scratching and restraining”. The findings implied that majority of the respondents disagreed that are physically abused by hitting, pushing and scratching has contributed highly to elderly abuse.

7.2.2 Emotionally abused

On the statement “emotionally abused by yelled at, called names and insulted”. The findings were that majority of the respondents agreed that are physically abused by yelled at, called names and insulted has contributed highly to elderly abuse. On the statement “locked in room”. These findings revealed elderly persons are emotionally abused either “denied of adequate care and supervision” or “isolated from others”.

7.2.3 Financially abused

On the statement “money, assets and property snatched from them without their consent” and “large sum of money withdrawn without their consent” the results indicated that together older male and women expressed their grievances that

mostly are financially abused. Which it has negatively affected them.

VIII. Possible Interventions on witchcraft beliefs and its effects on the Psychological well-being on the elderly people in Mwanjema, Lilongwe- Malawi.

8.1 Availability of Caregivers

On availability of caregivers’. The findings of this study shows that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the elderly’s are in need of caregivers in institutions and in their communities.

8.2 Availability of cash management programs

On availability of cash management programs those who strongly agreed were 92 respondents representing 61.7% and the findings of this study shows that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the government should take charge and address the challenges related to witchcraft beliefs.

8.3 Availability of multidisciplinary committees

On availability of multidisciplinary committees. The findings of this study shows that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed on the availability of multidisciplinary committee being available in the community and that the government should take charge and address the challenges related to witchcraft beliefs.

8.4 Churches to work hard on the effects of witchcrafts

On the statements “churches to work hard on the effects of witchcrafts” strongly agreed were 56 respondents representing 50.3% and on strongly agree there were 17 respondents representing 11.4%. These findings shows that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the churches should take charge to address challenges related to witchcraft spiritually.

IX. Recommendations

Recommendations were made to three stakeholders who would be essential in the implementation of the findings of this study. These stakeholders include: Government of Malawi, the Church and finally the multidisciplinary committees and caregivers. To the Government the study recommended that as policy makers they should come up with means and ways to create awareness on issues related to witchcraft and elderly abuse. For this recommendation to be effective they should do away with the counselors and employ professional social workers, counselors and psychologists to cater for the elderly peoples’ psychological well-



being. To the Church the study recommended that as an institution should come up with spiritual coping mechanisms to address challenges faced by the elderly people due to witchcraft beliefs. For this to be effective they should employ a mechanism where they should be able both the spiritual leaders and all the faithful to reach the elderly people in their homes. To the multidisciplinary committees and caregivers, the study recommended that as a learning institution they should come up with proper mechanisms to assist caregivers from the early age to accept and care for the elderly people without discrimination from issues related to witchcraft beliefs and for the availability of committees, the government to come up with channels and proper committees to help in dealing with the issues of witchcrafts, their welfare and elderly abuse.

X. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to: (i) the prevalence of elderly abuse and to navigate on the factors that contributes to elderly abuse in Mwanjema, Lilongwe Malawi; (ii) to explore the levels of psychological well-being of elderly people in Mwanjema, (iii) to assess the influence of witchcraft beliefs on the elderly's and (iv) lastly to identify the possible interventions that will improve the psychological well-being of the elderly people in Mwanjema, Lilongwe Malawi.

The study concluded that there was a high rate on the prevalence on witchcraft beliefs, on the factors that contributes to the elderly abuse were indeed physically, emotionally and financially abused. On the influence on witchcraft beliefs the study showed a weak relationship of between elderly's and people in the community. And finally on possible interventions there was a high urge on the three institutions "Government, Church and multidisciplinary committees" to intervene in order to improve the psychological well-being of the elderly people.

XI. Further studies

- Elderly abuse, Social Media and the Psychological Well-Being among young People.
- Navigating on ways of preventing elderly abuse through policies in Malawi.

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