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## **Introduction**

The prevalence of abuse in adult care settings is a research question that has been explored extensively. Background information and rationale for the selection of this research topic will be explained. The aims and objectives of this literature review will be stated. This research intends to carry out secondary systematic research and thematic review of published literature related to the prevalence of abuse in adult care in the care setting, utilising more than 20 relevant research articles. The methodology utilised in the research articles will be highlighted. Considerations of the importance of ethical practice in research including ethical codes and committees will be considered. The findings and discussions based on the review of published literature will be clearly stated. Conclusions and recommendations for future policy and practice will be discussed.

## **Background to the prevalence of abuse in adult care settings**

The National Health Service (2021) defines abuse as 'any action that violates a person's human or civil rights. It can take place anywhere, the abuser can be a stranger, a carer, a family member, or someone else in a position of trust.' The World Health Organisation (2002) also defines abuse as 'a single or repeated act or lack of action occurring within any relationship where trust is expected, which causes harm or distress to an older person'. Due to the various incidents in the past of the vulnerable individuals being abused and mistreated, The Care Act (2014) was established to safeguard service users from abuse or harm in health and social care in England. Cooper et al (2017) explain that the care act (2014) focuses on the clients holistically hence this will improve patient care, the six principles of safeguarding are better implemented, and these are empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, prevention, and accountability.

There is an increase in the older person population and life expectancies the demand for care homes will increase soon. (Phelan, 2015). It is always a very crucial time for individuals to select the right nursing and residential homes for their loved ones. Therefore, people need to know that the homes that are selected for their loved ones are not places where they will be abused or mistreated. The rationale for the selection of the prevalence of abuse in the adult care in the care settings is that various researchers have researched on this topic, it seems to be a common occurrence for the adult care settings, failing those individuals who depend on healthcare professionals to assist them in their activities of daily living. Nursing and care homes are beginning to put measures in place to prevent abuse by putting cameras in the residents' beds. Berridge et al (2019) explain that camera beds are becoming a way that homes are using to protect their residents. The issue as regards this is that the privacy of

clients could be compromised, hence this is a step that needs to be carried out with caution and the residents as well as the relatives should be up board with this decision.

**Research Question:** Is abuse prevalent in adult care settings after the Care Act of 2014?

**Aim:** To explore what causes abuse in adult care setting

**Objective:** To investigate the prevalence of abuse in adult care settings

## **Research Methodology**

### **Search Terms**

The search terms utilized in choosing the research articles were 'abuse in care settings', 'maltreatment in adult care', 'safeguarding and adult care' and 'abuse in adult care'. This search terms were used because safeguarding is one of the ways adults are protected when in care settings, also 'maltreatment is a form of abuse'. Lack of dignity in adult care settings' and 'neglect in adult care settings, were also some of the terms used to obtain relevant and appropriate research articles.

### **Data Source**

Pro Quest, Ebsco, Sage, Journal of Adult Protection, Springer Link, PLOS One, Journal of Applied research in intellectual disabilities were the search engines used to obtain the relevant research articles

### **Data Collection Methods**

A systematic literature review was undertaken in which secondary research was used to collect the research articles that were selected, this was undertaken to acquire more knowledge as regards the prevalence of abuse in adult care settings.

## Inclusion

The Inclusion criteria were 'abuse in care of the elderly,' 'adult abuse and safeguarding,' 'abuse in care of adults with learning difficulties', 'patient- centered care in adult care setting;' Research articles from 2015 to date taking into consideration that the Care Act was established in 2014, research articles that are related to the United Kingdom, was the focus of this systematic literature review.

## Exclusion

The exclusion criteria were abuse in children, abuse in adult care in hospitals, abuse in adolescents. The research articles before 2014. Research articles outside of the United Kingdom were not considered, it is to be acknowledged that abuse is a problem in other countries also but for the purpose of this literature review and to be focused it is only the United Kingdom that this research focused on. Below is a table of existing literature review

**Literature Review**

| Author and title                  | Research Questions or Research Objectives                                                        | Methods and Sample                                                             | Evaluation of the Article                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aspinal F., et al (2019),'        | To find out if there were any safeguarding issues among the research participants                | Semi-structure interviews with 12 participants                                 | Each of the participants had a safeguarding investigation, they had experienced poor care, abuse and neglect in the 12 months before the research                                         |
| Carr, S., et al (2019)'           | To determine if the research participants had experienced poor care, abuse and neglect           | An exploratory qualitative study a total of 23 services users were interviewed | Participants of the research demonstrated that there were safeguarding concerns that needed to be addressed                                                                               |
| Cooper, C., et al (2018),         | To identify if care staff deliver patient centered care is affected when care staff are stressed | Questionnaire/survey                                                           | Physical and verbal abuse were reported. Abuse seem to occur more by staff who were burnt out. Also residents who were more vulnerable were identified to be at risk of abuse             |
| Fyson, R., Patterson, A., (2020), | What do care staff understand by mistreatment of clients and sub standard care                   | Vignettes/ semi structured interviews                                          | 56 staff and 1 service manager participated, Physical abuse was the most common abuse reported 77% of the interviewees addressed physical abuse and was stated as the worst form of abuse |
| '                                 |                                                                                                  |                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                           |

| Literature Review           |                                                                                                                                                     |                                     |                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Author and title            | Research Questions or Research Objectives                                                                                                           | Methods and Sample                  | Evaluation of the Article                                                                   |
| Greener, J., (2020)         | Why is mistreatment of clients and poor care wide spread all over England?                                                                          | Ethnographic data                   | Poor leadership, inadequate staff, and care staff not really wanting to do the job          |
| Kupeli N., (2018)           | To enlighten healthcare professionals as regards the barriers to integrated care so their view towards this important of care may change positively | Interviews which were audiotaped    | low morale among care staff and discord within health and social care                       |
| Likupe, G., (2018)          | To investigate staff understanding and experience of communication with ethnic minority                                                             | Semi structured interviews          | Clients from ethnic minority regions are more like to receive poor care and sometimes abuse |
| Moore, S., (2017)           | To present some of the findings from an empirical, mixed method research                                                                            | Semi structured interviews          | Abuse in one of the homes involved a nurse threatening to give morphine to silence a client |
| Pedley, Y., (2019)          | Care staffs' opinions as regards media reports                                                                                                      | Single – case study , focus group   | This research even though portrays the negativity lessons can still be learnt               |
| Woolham, J., et al., (2019) | To describe the terms and conditions of service as regards care assistants                                                                          | Semi structured telephone interview | The conditions of service are poor hence no incentive to put in their best                  |

## Existing Literature on The Prevalence of Abuse in Care Settings

All the research articles that were chosen were able to explain the problem of abuse in adult care settings. Moore (2018) researched abuse in care and nursing homes, it was an empirical research paper and the method used was a self-completion questionnaire, both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the findings of this research was that changes needed to be made to the current methods to prevent and investigate practices of care professionals in care homes. It was also highlighted in this research article, that BUPA healthcare was televised in 2017 for the abuse of adult clients. It has got to the point where relatives of residential and care homes are now, putting on secret cameras and filming, health care professionals maltreat and ill-treatment of their loved ones for the necessary changes to occur. This just demonstrates that the necessary precautions to stop the prevalence of abuse in care settings has not been put in place, hence relatives of service users have become desperate and are trying to find ways to let the abuse come to light and this could lead to a better solution to this problem

Fisk (2015) highlights that there is a need for some form of surveillance in care and nursing homes if it is within appropriate safeguarding issues are taken into consideration. Some care homes are reported to want to explore the potential of having surveillance technologies in their homes. It could therefore be stated that this maybe the way forward, to prevent abuse. The research article also states on April 2014, the BBC broadcast did a program 'Behind closed doors: this demonstrated the prevalence of abuse in care settings and how it is carried out in

such a way that it is not easy to discover. Service users are not seen as equal partners when situations like this occur. The power dynamic tends to show that the service user does not have a say in their care. The health care professional is seen as the person who makes all the decisions, and the service user is just to accept. When the care is patient-centred, the service user has a say in the care they receive hence, the problem of abuse is very much reduced.

Kim and Park (2017) explain that patient-centred care recognizes the individuality of a patient in relation to the attitudes and care practices that surround them. The fact that adults in residential and care homes are often very vulnerable and depend a lot on the care staff. It is therefore important that care staff are dedicated to their jobs as, it reflects not only on the care staff that is not doing their job properly but the establishment.

Marsland et al (2015) carried out research that involved two local authorities in England and Scotland. The method used was a semi structured interview. The purpose of the research was the prevalence of abuse of older people in residential and nursing homes through the identifications of early indicators. The findings of this research were that there were indicators that could lead to the abuse of adults. There is a greater likelihood of care staff abusing service users when care staff are short-staffed, or when care staff feel overwhelmed.

Parker (2021) carried out a research during the covid – 19 pandemics in both England and Wales that focused on the structural discrimination and abuse, the purpose of the research article was to explore the high death toll of covid – 19 on care home residents and social care staff. The method used in this research was conceptual and drew on secondary data. The findings were that the death toll was high during this period and the methods used to acquire this data was secondary data collected by media reports, mortality statics and structural elder abuse was included in classifications, this research showed how abuse can be very detrimental to the care that individuals in residential and care homes receive and in extreme cases could lead to death. Hence the importance of finding out the causes of abuse in care settings and how it can be stopped.

Srmythe et al (2017) researched about investigating training required for nurses working with people that have dementia. The method used in this research was four focus groups, which were conducted with 11 qualified nurses the findings of this research was that the importance of person-centred approach when caring for patients also, communication, and clinical skills when working in nursing home settings was essential. When service users have a say in the

care that they receive it becomes an equal partnership and there is the less tendency of abuse, or neglect. This is because there is the openness and honesty. Service users can express their wishes and negotiations are able to be made.

Green et al (2018) argue that the privacy of clients in nursing and care homes are very important and should be protected. The fact that clients are dependent, and elderly does not say that their basic human rights should be taken away from them. The method used in this research was a systematic review. Healthcare professionals sometimes take away the autonomy for their clients without knowing that they are doing so for example a client that eats slowly, the carer may decide it will be faster to just feed the client however the client may not be happy with this act even though the healthcare staff may think what she is doing is helping. Human dignity and rights are also highlighted in this article. The findings of this research article were that some service users would like to have the opportunity to decide when people come to their rooms, as their personal space needs to be respected. This allows the service users to have a voice.

Rand et al (2021) highlight in the research carried out, that there is a balance between a homely environment for care and nursing homes, to make clients comfortable and protecting clients from harm. The method used in this research was a secondary research. It was a systematic search for articles published in England. The reason clients decide to live in nursing and care homes is for individuals to live well. Person-centred care comes to play, as this is when the client has a voice and can explain what they want, a client who is able to make decisions should be given the opportunity to make reasonable and visible decisions or suggestions when it comes to their care. The findings of this research were that the more service users feel comfortable in their environment the less anxious they will be, and this would decrease the prevalence of abuse in a relaxed and happy environment.

Gallagher et al (2016) argue that a recent survey carried out in 2013 explains that 50% of older people in care homes feared abuse and felt that their dignity was undermined. This is a high percentage and shows the extent of the problem of abuse in care settings, it is, therefore, one of the reasons that the prevalence of abuse needs to be addressed and researched. Service users are paying for good quality care and for them to be safe. It is therefore quite disturbing if such a high percentage feel that there is no dignity in the care, also the fact that there is the fear that they would experience abuse, shows that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done when it comes to the care that service users receive as regards the care settings.

Reid et al (2018) explain that guidelines for ethical behaviour in research are based on the principles of beneficence, do good and non – maleficence, do no harm. It is important that none of the participants of the research felt bad or uncomfortable. All the research articles that were reviewed systematically made sure that ethical considerations were maintained and where permissions needed to be taken for the research to be approved this was undertaken. All the participants of the research were all kept confidential as no names were mentioned in the research in accordance with the data protection act (2018).

### **The Identified Gaps in The Researched Literature**

When focusing on the gaps that were noticed in the literature review conducted there were few gaps that were noticed. Firstly, the research articles did not discuss what happened to the care staff that were caught abusing clients in nursing and care homes. All the research papers that identified that abuse existed did not discuss the measures put in place by the nursing and care homes to prevent abuse.

Secondly, the research articles mostly discussed abuse from the point of view of the care staff but not from the point of view of the service users or their relatives. It would have given a more balanced argument.

Thirdly some of the research articles that were systematically reviewed did not give the reader a clear understanding of what their relationship was to the research they were doing hence their gives room for there to be biased.

Fourthly, some of the research articles that were reviewed had a very small number of participants as regards the sample used for the research; hence it may not be a full representation of, what is happening in a big population.

Lastly in all the research articles that discussed abuse that health care professionals witnessed, none of the participants stated that they reported bad practices they witnessed, also staff still did not feel confident enough to whistle blow when needed, probably because they felt they could be singled out or isolated among their colleagues.

### **Limitations of the Research Articles**

Ross and Zaidi (2019) explain that ‘study limitations represent weakness within a research design, researchers have a duty to the academic community to present complete and honest limitations of a study’. Most of the research articles that were focused upon were qualitative research, this could be due to research being time consuming and costly. The methods used

in this kind of research are questionnaires, focused groups, semi structured interviews, and vignette which have their short comings, for example some of the research methods used were posted questionnaires, one of the disadvantages of this kind of research is that sometimes participants may not complete the questionnaire properly. For example, incomplete questionnaires returned to the researcher. There is also the possibility that it may not be the right person who fills in the questionnaire, thereby the results may not be correct. Some of the research articles were of a small sample, which could be argued that it is not a true picture of what is, happening, in other areas. Although it could be stated that such research could be replicated. Some of the research articles reviewed had a low return of questionnaires, although researchers did send reminders to the participants sometimes participants do not return the questionnaires which waste time and money

The fact that the service users or their relatives were not really considered as regards abuse in care settings makes the information one-sided therefore this does not give a true picture of the problem. For the research articles to give a better understanding of the issue the opinion and the voice of the service users should have been heard and their opinions should be considered. It is possible that when the service users and their relatives give their opinion on the issue it would be a different result and the problem of abuse in adult care settings could be worse than what is discussed by health care professionals as it is the service users that are at the receiving end.

### **Findings: Thematic Analysis**

Abuse in adult care settings have become an issue that care staff witness on a regular basis hence, it can be argued that care staff have become immune to it and tend to ignore it, as it has become a situation where 'institutional abuse' has become the order of the day. Which is not how it should be.

It has been stated in more than one research article that, the prevalence of abuse in adult care settings cannot be measured correctly as the true picture and the extent of the problem is not known. This is because most abuse is carried out behind closed doors.

A few nursing and care homes are thinking of placing surveillance cameras in the common areas of their homes to monitor abuse but most of the abuse takes place behind closed doors, in the service user's room, when no one else is there to witness it.

Care staff are not properly trained, and this kind of job does not need a lot of experience, therefore the wrong staff are employed for the job. One of the managers who was a participant of one of the research articles reviewed, stated that if she had her way, she would sack half of her staff and get new staff, this shows that even though the manager knows that her staff are not fit for purpose, it is a major problem for that manager to get new staff. This is a great concern.

The Care Quality Commission inspects all the nursing and care homes in the United Kingdom and give them ratings, a research was carried out and the care and nursing homes that took part in this research showed that some of the homes that were rated 'outstanding' and 'very good', the service users in these homes were experiencing abuse. This was of great concern as the public would believe that if the Care Commission could rate such homes with outstanding and very good, this should be a clear indicator that such homes were of high quality. This could be seen as misleading the public.

### **Research Findings: To explore what causes abuse in adult care setting**

1. Abuse is still very much an issue in care homes and nursing homes.
2. The issue of poor staff training is one of the main issues that brings about abuse as staff are unaware sometimes what they should or should not be doing
3. Care staff are afraid to report abuse that they witness as they are not properly trained as regards whistle blowing correctly and feel that they will be picked upon or isolated.
4. Most abuses are carried out behind closed doors hence abuse goes unnoticed
5. Care staff are overworked and sometimes are burnt out
6. Poor working conditions for care staff hence no incentive to put in their best
7. Safeguarding training even though is offered to care staff it is not used when caring for clients.
- 8 A lot of care and nursing homes are short staffed; hence staff are over worked, a shift that four staff are supposed to work, sometimes there are only three staff and sometimes two staff. This puts staff and service users at risk.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic literature review, has demonstrated that the prevalence of abuse in care settings, the prevalence of abuse in adult care settings, cannot be quantified and even though the care act of (2014) was established to make sure that individuals are given the individualised care that they deserve, however it is still an issue, because all the research articles that have being systematically reviewed are research articles that have being written after 2014. Several reasons where abuse is occurs has being discussed.

Safeguarding of adults were also discussed in this research review, and its importance when it comes to adult care. Patient centred care was also discussed, and it was shown how useful it is in preventing abuse, the fact that service users are given the opportunity to have a say in their care helps to reduce abuse in adult care. Dignity in care was also discussed the fact that service users are given the respect that a human being deserves makes service users feel valued and respected. The prevalence of abuse in the care settings in the United Kingdom is still an issue and still needs a lot of focus and more training and refresher training is needed in order to remind staff that service users are dependent on them for a lot of things, and this should not be seen that there should be a power shift, and the service users to be seen as lesser beings or that they can be treated with little or no respect. Every human being deserves the right to be treated with respect, and dignity free from abuse and neglect, no matter, the class, sex, creed, religion, or age.

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