The Incidence of Elder Abuse in East Asia: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Aims: Elder abuse (EA) is a critical social, health, and economic issue worldwide. To date, there is limited information on EA in certain similar culture-specific subpopulations, especially in East Asia. This study is to summarize EA incidence in East Asia and to identify its variations and the heterogeneity in the incidence estimates.

Methods: A systematic review and meta-analysis was conducted. A systematic literature search was conducted from start date of each database to July 5th, 2020 on Embase, PubMed, EBSCOhost, CINAHL, ProQuest, Web of Science, Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect (JEAN), and the World Health Organization Global Library, using a combination of free text and Medical Subject Headings/Emtree to identify relevant articles. The risk of bias was assessed. After the data extraction and analyses, the pooled incidence was calculated. Potential sources of heterogeneity were explored by subgroup analysis and meta-regression analysis by Stata version 15.1.

Results: Twelve eligible studies were included in the meta-analysis, which involved 79395 subjects from 3 East Asian countries (China, Japan, and South Korea) ranging from 2004 to 2020. The overall incidence of EA was 78.33 per 1000 person-year (95%CI: 39.12-156.87). The meta-regression revealed considerable heterogeneities (χ^2=15568, d.f.=11, P < 0.001; I^2=99.9%) from perspectives of methodology, geography and demography. The sampling method, sample size, scope, instrument, data collection method, income classification, participants type and urbanity are all the heterogeneity sources, which can explain nearly 100% of the variance between studies.

Conclusion: The incidence of EA in this study is not as high as the global level. It may be furtherly underestimated in East Asia due to cultural norms. It is imperative to develop a culture-tailored EA assessment instrument to evaluate potential victims. Future studies should also identify more effective educational programs to raise the public's awareness and promote recognition ability.

Keywords: elder abuse, meta-analysis, prevalence, systematic review