Elder Abuse and Neglect: Clergy Awareness, Knowledge, Intervention Preferences, and Perceived Severity

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Valuing Older Persons

“Do not cast me off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength is spent.”

(Psalms 71:9)
Research Problem

What is the perceived level of elder abuse and neglect awareness, knowledge, and intervention preferences among Protestant clergy in Kentucky?

Focus of Study

- Elder abuse and neglect.
- Protestant clergy in Kentucky.
- Awareness, knowledge, intervention preferences, perceived severity.
- Demographic characteristics of clergy.
- Parallel research-- global models (50 years/older), sociology and psychology.
Select Literature Profile:
Major Studies

■ 2007-- University of Kentucky Report.
■ 2004--National Center for Elder Abuse Report.
■ 2004-- World Health Organization.
■ 1991-- Dissertation-- Mandatory Reporting/Confidentiality (Scott, 1991)

Select Concepts/Key Authors

■ Clergy-social work collaborative training
  (Susman and Bruce, 2008).
■ Clergy-conduit for “well-being”
■ Clergy-limited time and resources
  (Homiak and Singletary, 2007).
■ Clergy-clinician collaboration
  (Pargament and Ano, 2006).
Select Concepts/Key Authors

- Religious-community health assets mapping (Gunderson, 2004).
- Faith-community networking (Klinenberg, 2002).
- Clergy role--Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) (Teaster, Nerenberg & Stansbury, 2003).

Methodology

- Purpose-- research, describe and measure clergy attitudes.
- Research Design-- descriptive cross-sectional survey and study.
- Dependent Variables-- clergy: awareness, knowledge, intervention preferences, perceived severity.
- Independent Variables-- clergy: tenure, education, congregation size, location.
The Study: Selection of Participants

Why Protestant?

- Protestants comprise the predominant denomination in Kentucky-- 42.5% (ARDA, 2008).
- Protestant clergy in Kentucky: N= 5000.
- Solicited for survey: 300.
- Sample size: n =160.

The Study: Sampling Method

Triangulation-- use of several research methods to validate findings (Babbie, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Quantitative:
- Chi square-- determines the statistical significance of the relationship.
- Phi correlation coefficient-- determines the strength of the association among variables.

Qualitative:
- Key informant-- sample group representative: well-versed, willing to share.
The Study: Instrumentation

Self-administered survey using:
- Multiple choice, Likert-scale, open-ended and demographic profile questions.
- An extensive literature search and a dissertation (Scott, 1991) survey to enhance content validity.
- A pretest to ensure that the study had face validity.

Key informant survey using:
- Guided interview questions used for each facet measured in the self-administered survey.

Key Informant Select Questions

- Do clergy have orientation programs for clergy who are new to the state? (Awareness, Knowledge)
- Are there continuing education programs for clergy in Kentucky? (Knowledge)
- Is there an emphasis on providing services geared toward special or particular age groups in church ministry? (Intervention Preferences)
- In a forced ranking situation, do you think that clergy feel that spouse and domestic abuse are more serious than elder abuse? (Perceived severity)
National Center for Elder Abuse (NCEA)--Types (2004)

- Abandonment-- desertion of a vulnerable adult by one who has assumed responsibility…
- Emotional-- infliction of anguish, pain or distress through verbal or non-verbal acts…
- Financial/Material-- illegal or improper concealment of funds, property or assets…

National Center for Elder Abuse (NCEA)--Types (2004)

- Neglect-- refusal or failure by those responsible to provide food, shelter, healthcare, fiduciary support or protection…
- Physical-- infliction of or threat to inflict physical force…
- Sexual-- nonconsensual sexual contact of any kind…
- Self-neglect-- self-chosen behavior that threatens a vulnerable adult by their own refusal to provide for basic personal safety and health…
Findings: Demographics

- Age--67%, over 46 years.
- Gender--89%, male.
- Marital Status-- 84%, married.
- Years as Clergy--51%, over 20 years.
- Congregation Size--53%, 250 or more.
- Graduate Courses-- 70%, 1 or more.

Major Findings:
Frequency Distribution

- 53% survey response rate (160/300)
  Of these respondents:
- 44% report awareness of the law
- 29% know Adult Protective Services (APS) as appropriate reporting agency
- 14% report being fully informed-- (i.e., awareness of legal and reporting responsibility.)
Major Findings: Facets

- Awareness -- clergy are poorly informed about legal reporting and referral resources.
- Knowledge -- uncertainty gap among clergy concerning abuse types and resources.
- Intervention Preferences -- contradictory responses (e.g., while feeling untrained, some clergy are willing to counsel).
- Perceived Severity -- clergy agree on child abuse severity but not other forms (forced ranking).

Major Findings: Awareness

- Clergy awareness improved comparatively between 1991 (11% NE) and 2008 (44% KY).
- 56% do not know the law to which they are accountable.
- 66% do not know where to report abuse.
- 73% do not know where to refer for counseling.
- 80% do not know where to direct for financial assistance.
Major Findings: Knowledge

- Coursework does not equip clergy with detailed training.
- 70% report at least one graduate-level counseling course.
- 82% do not feel prepared to provide therapy for elder abuse.
- 84% report no elder abuse training within the past three years.

Major Findings: Intervention Preferences

- Variability and inconsistency in responses for reporting.
- 82% would report physical abuse.
- 47% would report self-neglect.
- 10% would report if they perceived the state’s inability to assist the victim.
Major Findings:
Perceived Severity

Forced severity ranking—child, elder, spouse:
- Child abuse deemed most severe (91%).
- No distinguishable trends for spouse abuse and elder abuse.

Key informants:
- Pastors for youth/ latent bias—ageism?
- “Just do not hear about elder abuse as much by comparison to child or spouse abuses.”
- “Newspapers, television news/shows, big screen movies rarely address this topic.

Major Findings:
Contingency Table Analysis

Chi-square--statistical significance at p< .01;
Phi coefficient value--(.2-.5 strength=low).

Awareness
- Ministry Setting/Financial assistance, p= .008; .282 (low).

Knowledge
- Preparation for Therapy/Number of Courses, p= .005; .348 (low).
Noteworthy Patterns--Contingency Tables: Demographics/ Facets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic variables</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Perceived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years served as clergy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church ministry</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation size</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry setting</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Noteworthy means differences of more than 10% among variables but not statistically significant.)

Noteworthy Patterns

- Age and experience contribute to awareness and knowledge.
- Non-married clergy would almost always report abuse (15% of sample).
- Awareness, knowledge and access to resources increases with congregation size.
- Females were more aware of reporting resources (11% of sample).
- Resources are more accessible and familiar in urban vs. rural settings.
Noteworthy Patterns

- Ageism is an emerging diversity matter.
- Elder abuse -- “tip of the iceberg” reporting (only 18% or 1 in 5 cases).
- “Social tsunami” of older persons may breed resentment--non-contributing and burdensome members of society.
- Codes of conduct are lacking/not used by nonmainstream clergy.

Study Limitations

- Potential lack of respondent honesty in self-reporting.
- Possible inherent bias with survey instruments’ design-- despite researcher reflexivity.
- Differences in education among mainstream and nonmainstream clergy not addressed.
- Cultural values and theological foundation of Midwest Protestant clergy may affect application.
- Multiple cross-tabulations using a commonly applied alpha level of .05 may create Type I errors.
Recommended Areas for Future Research

Awareness
- Establish high-risk screening criteria.
  -- use church census.
  -- evaluate urban/rural risk issues.
  -- consider caregiver stress and support needs.
  -- determine special populations needs and expectations-- e.g., immigrants, baby-boomers.

Knowledge
- Launch seminary/university-based education.
  -- offer academic updates to acquaint new and existing clergy with current services, tools and resources.
  -- encourage community counseling center partnerships with clergy and development of special interest in elder abuse and neglect awareness and prevention.
  -- determine usefulness of models from parallel fields such as VIRTUS for heightening awareness and knowledge levels (VIRTUS, 2008).
Recommended Areas for Future Research

*Intervention Preferences*

- Expand clergy time and resources.
  - evaluate appropriateness of technology aids and support to create time management efficiencies.
  - consider “executive coaching” of clergy for effective use of resources and goal/task priority setting.
  - conduct “religious health assets mapping” to determine the exhaustive inventory of community resources (Gunderson, 2004).

*Perceived Severity*

- Use data to advance research and policy.
  - acquire data for policy analysis and development.
  - strive for adoption of consistent definition for comparison and benchmarking.
  - consider use and or application of emerging research Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) (Teaster, 2003; Liddle, 2006).
Discussion

No one listens to the cries of the poor or the sound of a wooden bell.

(Haitian proverb)

“For the Lord hears the poor and needy”

(Psalms 69.33)

Thank you. □Questions?