

**Lives in the Street – Challenges, Abuse, and Protection of Street Elders in Sri Lanka**

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**Abstract**

Aging is marked by remarkable changes in peoples' lives since it is encountered with a huge number of issues such as loneliness, lack of income, medical issues, with the decline of their physical strength. From the world perspective Zoyza, T.D (2014) states that: one out of every ten people in the world today belongs to the category of older people. In another perspective, the rapidly growing aging population badly created social, economic, and cultural issues. This study has attempted to focus on the challenges, abuse, and protection of the lives of elders who are begging in the streets. The main research problem of this study was "Being economically inactive pushes elders to street life? Three main research objectives were formulated in line with the main research problem of this study. To identify the purposes for begging in the streets, to identify the main challenges street elders are facing in the present. Identifying the ways that they abuse in the street lives were major research objectives. The study, within an exploratory background Case studies, were descriptively analyzed in a qualitative research design. The study population were purposely selected as street elders above 60 years 15 males and 35 females respectively around in Nugegoda, Kelaniya and Bellanwila geographical area. Observations and interviews were used as primary data collecting techniques while collecting secondary data through paper articles, annual reports and scholarly articles. Lack of access to fulfil basic needs –Shelter, Foods, Medicine, water, clothes, safety, Ignorance – based on their out appearance (bad smell, with wound), Less attention, Lack of sanitary facilities, Lack of affection, not legal guardians and domestic violence as they age, failing to meet proper guidance were identified as challenges they face in their day-to-day life. Most street elders were detached from their families as they age because: economically they are inactive, failed a caregiver to fulfil their caregiving responsibilities, their family members also could not meet with good economic stability. The study identified that the street elders are encountered with physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuses in their street lives. The study recommends that the close relative's attention must be paid to protect their physical and mental strength. Requests of majorities were to have a safe place with sanitary facilities until they die.

**Keywords:** *Street elders, challenges, poverty, caregiving, aging*

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