

**National Adult Protective Services Resource Center  
NAPSA/NCPEA Research Committee  
Research to Practice Brief  
Research Summary**

**Title** - Self-report Measure of Psychological Abuse of Older Adults

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**Summary of Research** - This study developed an instrument to collect self-reports of psychological abuse (PA) in the elderly, which is defined as anguish, pain, or distress through verbal or nonverbal acts. As of this study, there was a lack of a specific definition and method to assess PA.

Prior to this study, the authors conceptualized PA using three-dimensional concept mapping. By clustering statements collected from literature reviews and expert panels, the authors created five concepts of PA in descending order of severity: isolation, insensitivity and disrespect, shaming and blaming, threats and intimidation, and trusted other risk factors. These concepts were converted to questions developed for self-reports and third party observations, and subsequently developed into the Older Adult Psychological Abuse Measure (OAPAM).

The sample population included 226 clients from Chicago and neighboring counties, recruited through the Illinois Department of Aging (IDOA). Using the Rasch measurement model, researchers adopted a self-report rating scale of 'no' or 'yes', along with 'suspected' to allow for clinical input. Researchers found that, using IDOA criteria, only 43% of clients reported PA. However, using the OAPAM, 84% of participants reported at least one symptom of PA. Isolation was found to be the most serious type of PA, as it was closely related to physical abuse. Twenty-four percent reported severe symptoms, defined as made to feel small, talked about as if not there, made to feel ashamed, and deliberately confused. Seven percent reported extreme PA, defined as confinement, deprivation of assistance or advice, manipulation with medication, and prevention of outside contact. Overall, results supported the OAPAM and its construct validity.

### Practice and Policy Implications

Researchers were optimistic that the OAPAM could be an effective tool in improving research in the area of PA in older adults, particularly considering the current lack of self-report measurements. Ideally, with further standardization, the test could be accessible to elder-abuse staff, police, family members, and other individuals involved in elder abuse claims, with little need for training. Overall, the OAPAM would help establish more consistent prevalence ratings of abuse and possibly find correlations to help prevent future abuse.

### For Further Reading

- Acierno, R., Hernandez, M. A., Amstadter, A. B., Resnick, H. S., Steve, K., Muzzy, W., et al. (2010). Prevalence and correlates of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse and potential neglect in the United States: The national elder mistreatment study. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*, 292-297. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.163089
- Conrad, K. J., Iris, M., & Ridings, J. W. (2009). *Conceptualizing and measuring financial exploitation and psychological abuse of elderly individuals* (NCJ 228632). National Institute of Justice. 197. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/228632.pdf>
- Conrad, K. J., Iris, M., Ridings, J. W., Fairman, K., & Rosen, A. (in press). Conceptual model and map of psychological abuse of older adults. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect*.
- Conrad, K. J., Iris, M., Riley, B. B., Mensah, E., & Mazza, J. (2009). *Developing End-User Criteria and a Prototype for an Elder Abuse Assessment System* (Project # 2009-IJ-CX-0202). National Institute of Justice.
- National Research Council. (2003). *Elder mistreatment, abuse, neglect, and exploitation in aging America. Panel to review risk and prevalence of elder abuse and neglect*. Bonnie, R., & Wallace, R. (Eds.), Washington DC: National Academies Press.

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