MODERNIZATION AND AGEING PATTERNS IN NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT
Today, aged Nigerians are not endowed with societal status as their counterpart in traditional society. The acceptance of Western culture and education based on modernization and ideas of industrial revolution which free humanity from the chains of nature and tradition. This study relying on secondary sources of data, the study revealed presently, society has created youth centred with a set of value, freedom and rapid dissemination of new ideas. The religious, educational moral and political functions of the aged have been taken over by new institutions in Nigeria. Therefore, all these modern institutions have created cultural obstacles on aged where the aged are abandoned socially and psychologically, making them unnecessary, marginal and alien to the society and the culture is no longer their own but the societal trends to assess individual on what the person has achieved deleterious influence on the prestige of the aged. The study recommended the revitalization of cultural values to enable establish the morals that could restore function and encourage the participation of aged in the modern era.

Key Words: Modernization, aged, culture, education and tradition.

INTRODUCTION
Traditional cultures still regard their elders as authoritative decision-makers and a valuable source of counseling and wisdom. But much of modern society, enamored with the beauty of youth, the flash of high technology, and material recognition and gain, seems to have forgotten the value of the dimension of accumulated experience and knowledge. Today, the persuasive lack of accurate information on the contribution of older people make them unproductive and dependent in the society.

Again, the traditional values that underpin family support system are under pressure and are beginning to change. Richard (2002), observes in traditional societies older persons have control over certain resources and are viewed as the guardians of wisdom. Consequently, they are treated with great respect and they occupy positions of status. But modernization and industrialization are causing these traditional value systems to change and value placed on economic, success and formal education. As the status of aged in traditional societies erodes, the traditional support prove insufficient. Then, modernization is a product of migration, youths who tend to be the most mobile members of society, are attracted in the city by the promise of existing charges and new career opportunities. At city, they marry and establish permanent residence, thus breaking up the extended family; which causes residential segregation of the generations and accentuation of social differences between them.

Urbanization has a tendency to glorify youth as the embodiment of progress and achievement, youth is viewed as the means for attaining progress. The rapidity of change in urban means that young are socialized for a very uncertain future. The traditions and accumulated experience of old generations are increasingly seen as irrelevance because they no longer apply to the emerging order of things which create
the generation gap. Therefore, urbanization is a process of transformation of a total society and place the aged in a very different position from youth generations and the net result is lower status for the aged. As society develops social structures are replaced with devaluing structures, indication of the view that modernization brings a more civilized culture, where the aged are abandoned socially and psychological, making them unnecessary, marginal and alien to the society and the culture is no longer their own but belongs to the young generation.

PROBLEMS OF MODERNIZATION ON AGEING IN NIGERIA

In modern society, the aged are abused physically, emotionally or psychologically through verbal abuse, humiliation or intimidation or even denied financially. For instance, a trusted youth, could illegally use or misappropriate the aged financial assets or property. Also, abuse takes place within the family. This involves neglect, such as the failure to provide attention, adequate food, clean clothing, safe and comfortable place to live, good health care, personal hygiene and the opportunity for social contacts.

Moreover, aged suffer from loss of respect within the family, which are disrespectful, dishonouring, isolating or contemptuous. Social or domestic violence, which exist in relations between an older person and his family. Sadly, the perpetrators of violence and abuse against older persons are most often among family members, friends or acquaintances. And, the aged abuse themselves, through self-neglect. Sometimes, cultural abuse place on aged women for causing bad luck to families or a community in the form of illness and death. Troll (2000), says incidences have been reported where a woman has been ostracized, tortured, maimed or even killed if she failed to flee from the community.

Consequently, their abuse are based on political violence, tribal or communities war which affect them (older persons) directly or indirectly, through displacement. The special needs of displaced older persons are rarely provided, in refugee camps, older persons often lose out when forced to compete for food and health care distribution. Here, the aged causes a range of long term physical and psychological health problems which include permanent physical damage, medication and alcoholic dependency, lowered immune system response, chronic eating disorders and malnutrition, depression, fearfulness and chronic anxiety, suicide tendencies and death. Thus, the indirect and human costs of abuse of older people result from reduced productivity, diminished quality of life, emotional pain and suffering, distrusts, the loss of self-esteem, disability and premature death.

Mostly, in the economic area, aging influences economic growth, savings, investment and consumption, labour markets, pensions, taxation and the transfers of wealth, property and care from one generation to another. Also, the aged population affect the healthcare, family composition and living arrangements, housing and migration. Daniel (2008), views on the political arena (1993), general election population produced a powerful voice in the nation, which influence voting patterns and representation. The older voters mostly, read, watch the news, educate themselves about the issues, and they vote in much higher percentages than any other age groups in society.

According to Akinson (2006) ideas on Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that the population of older persons is growing by 2 percent each year. Then, the ageing group which is considerably faster than the population as a whole in the nation and the population is expected to continue growing more rapidly than other age groups for at least in the next 25 years. The growth rate of those 60 or older will reach 2.8 percent annually in 2010 – 2030 (OECD). The rapid growth will require far reaching economic and social adjustments of the nation.

Change Perception on Aging

Aging is a complex sequence of changes; the organs and function of the body are impaired, where some people have mild or severe psychological disorders brought about by degenerative diseases or other causes. Then, there are changes in sensory and motor capacities of processing functions associated with intelligence and in its physical basis.

Moreover, people’s position in society changes; their beliefs, attitudes and personal qualities alter, as does their behaviour. Really, the content and organization of one’s experience changes, which is traced from those major factors of individual biology, genetics and adaptability, then, there are existence of natural losses in cognitive capacities in wisdom, knowledge and experience.
The ageing are recognized through some changes in farming crops to less labour intensiveness, more conservative and subsistence oriented, not able to adapt to technological change and less willing to experiment with new modes of production and any time they could stop farming because of illness (ageing). At present, the OECD recorded that civil servants men become eligible for full pension at the age between 60 and 65 years while the most common standard retirement age for women is between 55 and 60 years.

Ageing and Gender Patterns
The population that certainly requires care is the oldest old (OECD), those 80 years of age or older. But some have developed strategies for caring for themselves and for each other, and thus able to receive and give care and support, to remain independent and to have control over their own lives. Really, the percentage of the oldest old is growing very rapidly and there is an urgent need to expand care and security networks. The most vulnerable older person are women, who are more lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, less likely to have paid work, and less likely to be eligible for pensions where they are available. Women are eligible for pensions because of their lower pay and interrupted work histories; they are more likely to receive lower pensions. Older women who have lost their partners greatly outnumber their male counterparts. Hence, widows are often denied access to or control over resources. In this case, women’s inheritance right are poorly established in our society. For this reason, women sink into poverty in their older years.

Then, the feminization of the older population is a phenomenon. Basically, women have traditionally fewer opportunities to earn and save. More often than not, they are paid less than men for the same work and they are more likely find work in the informal sector. When they do work in paid labour force, their participation is likely be shorter and more irregular, as they may interrupt their careers to fulfil older family obligations on to provide care to an older family member. Because women are less than men, when they do receive pensions, the pensions may provide less. And, unfortunately for women, social security which is supposed to provide security for older persons, was created for the benefit of wage earners and usually does not recognize the value of household work, child rearing and elder care.

Furthermore, our cultural and legal systems also discriminate against women. In reality, our women often have a lower inheritance than men. Under some systems, daughters inherit only half as much as their brothers and mothers inherit even less. And sometimes, when a woman becomes a widow, she may retain custody of her children, while the legal guardianship poses to a male relative and with it control of the children’s assets and property. And, the extreme form of discrimination occurs when due to local catastrophes, accidents, crop failure or poor weather and older women may be accused of witchcraft. Then she may be ostracized, chased away, between or even killed. And, essential challenge is to promote a culture that values the experience and knowledge that come with age.

Moreover, the intervention to treat the social, economic, and political conditions that are fertile ground for abuse of elders can improve the general conditions of life of older persons and can reduce the violation of their rights as well as those of other population group. The goal is to promote the human rights and to protect the rights of older men and women have led to the recognition of elder abuse as a human rights issue.

Again, society could gain by providing the elder group with social infrastructure and some finance for mutual support activities or for any other activities that would allow them to join forces, to place collectively with other generations, and to link up with external agencies – including for seeking employment or credit based on their vast ideas and experience in society.

However, the good cultural values can result in enabling processes that can restore function and expand the participation of older people in all aspect of society, through establishing the age friendly or provision of well lit streets and good transport systems, recreation services that offer exercise programmes for older people, educational services that offer life long learning and literacy programmes, social services that can provide hearing aids or instruction in sign language, enabling rehabilitation programmes, cataract and hip replacement surgery etc.
Traditionally, old age has been associated with sickness, dependency, and a lack of productivity. Today, this traditional view is considered just plain wrong, and now, public ideologies reflect this change. Most people are quite able to adapt as they grow older and remain independent well into very old age. But in modern era, older people continue to work in paid and unpaid work. Voluntary activities of older people make an important to society. By encouraging and enabling their participation, and realizing their vast potential as resources, the problem of an ageing population would be transformed into the benefit of a mature base.

Consequently, the provision of a balanced social protection could enable societies who are willing to plan to be able to afford to grow old. The goal must be to recognize and harness the skills and experience of older people and to ensure adequate living standard for them. And mostly, women are much more likely to sink into poverty in their older years. Then, security schemes to alleviate poverty must be take into account that most of the older poor are women, of whom many have limited experience in the labour market.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Basically, strong effort must be developed to reduce the incidence of major disease, guidelines on physical activity and healthy diet must be established, in this case, public awareness campaigns are needed to discourage tobacco use and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Health and social service professionals must be trained to counsel older people on healthy activities, and special effort must be made to reduce the risk of social isolation. In addition, health professionals must be trained in the specialized care of older persons, which can require very different approaches and treatments than care for young people.

Indeed, efforts must also be made to include older people in prevention and education efforts to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, and this can be done through the development of health and disease prevention. And, other health related issues which must be confronted are:-

- Provision cost effective, equitable and dignified long-term care.
- Reducing inequalities in access to primary health care and long-term care.
- Eliminating age discrimination in health and social service systems.
- Ensuring high standards and stimulating environments in residential care facilities.
- Ensuring that all people have the right to death with dignity.
- Ensuring policies that allow people to die where they choose, surrounded by whom they choose.
- Make cost-efficient treatments, such as cataract surgery and hip replacements, available to older people with low incomes.
- Increasing affordable access to medications.
- Encouraging a wide range of suitable housing options.

In modern period, the growing awareness of the abuse of older persons and changing social policies must create the enactment of new legislation to criminalize elder abuse and to increase penalties for certain crimes against older persons. And, in some cases, regulations and policies could be adopted to supplement state laws and to establish enforcement systems.

**CONCLUSION**

For good result orientation and the best option forward for elder people in Nigeria, these methods must be adopted as follows:-

- Development of screening and assessment tool for use in primary health care settings
- Establishing an education package on elder abuse for primary health care professionals.
- Creating and disseminate a research methodology kit to study elder abuse.
- Building a minimum data set concerning violence and older people.
- Ensuring dissemination of the research findings through scientific journals.
- Establishing a national inventory of good practices.
- Mobilize civil society through raising awareness of the widespread magnitude of abuse.

Other strategies are:

- Watching their weight, because ageing obesity people are risk of age related disease of cardiovascular.
- Rest and sleep, their bodies need adequate and sound relaxation.
• Stress, aging people should try their possible best to eliminate stressful ideology.
• Thoughts emotions and attitudes must be eliminated by the aging group because these do not have drugs.
• Exercise activities through walk, dance, playing gold, swim, lift weights activities must be develop by aging group.

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