

Editorial

The Demography and Sociology of Ageing: Implications for Nigeria

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Worldwide, both the number and proportion of people aged 60 years and over (otherwise called the elderly or aged) are increasing, albeit, at different rates in different parts or regions of the world (the cut-off age for some countries is 65 years). This phenomenon has been on for many decades in the developed countries of Europe, North America and Oceania; it is relatively recent in the middle income countries, and at incipient stage in the developing countries of Africa and Asia. According to Waite (2004), the number of the aged rose more than threefold since 1950, from approximately 130 million to 419 million in 2000, with their share of the population increasing from 4 per cent to 7 per cent during the period. Another estimate indicates that nearly 10 per cent of the world's population or over 600 million persons are over the age of 60 years, and this is expected to double by 2050. About two-thirds of these 600 million persons live in developing countries (Schwarz, 2003).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has a young population; only about 5 per cent of its population is aged 60 year and above. Nevertheless, the number of people aged 60 year and above is very large indeed; the 2006 population and housing census recorded nearly seven million (NPC, 2009). The 1991 census recoded 2,927,737 Nigerians or 3.3 per cent aged 65 years and over; including the population aged 60-64 increases the number of Nigerian elder population to 4,618,111 or 5.2 per cent of the total population (NPC, 1998). In other words, the absolute size of the elderly in Nigerian increased from about 4.6 million in 1991 to about 7 million in 2006. The demographic profile of the country suggests that there is a high prospect for a quantum leap of the elderly population in Nigeria. Estimates by the United Nations (2012) showed that the elderly population in Nigeria will increase from 6.4 million in 2005 to 11.5 million in 2025, and then 25.5 million by 2050. This implies that the elderly population will constitute about 10 percent of the total Nigeria population by year 2050. To be sure, the dramatic increases envisaged for the older population will exert powerful pressures on health care delivery systems and social institutions such as the family that provide instrumental, financial and emotional support for the elderly (Waite, 2004).

Ageing may concern an individual or a population in distinctly different ways. An individual ages as his chronological age increases, between birth and death, passing through an orderly sequence of irreversible stages which include

infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age (UN, 1973). The ageing of human populations is a much more complex notion. Unlike the case of the individual, a population does not necessarily age over time, but may remain unchanged or even grow younger over some time. While the ageing of an individual entails a progressive increase in his age, the ageing of a population consists of an increase in the proportion of persons defined as aged in the population. Both of these processes have far reaching social, demographic, economic and other implications which countries must content with in their planning, policy and programmatic processes.

The populations of the advanced countries of the world have aged considerably during the past two centuries, mainly as a result of declining fertility. Conversely, the populations of currently developing countries have not experienced substantial fertility declines, but improvement in health and environment conditions have prolonged lives and reduced high mortality rates, thereby increasing the number of older people in the population. By implication, as fertility continues to decline in these countries in their process of the demographic transition, there will be considerable increase in the population of the elderly. The extent to which these countries will absorb and care for this imminently large population of senior citizens is of both scholarly and pragmatic importance. Some of the major implications of the ageing phenomenon in developed countries, as evidenced from the large body of literature, are summarized below.

In highly industrialized countries, with a large population of the elderly, ageing of the population tends to depress the level of living, because of large chunk of the population become dependents rather than producers of good and services. Not only the relative size of the working population, but also the efficiency of workers may be affected by ageing of the population and the concomitant ageing of the labour force. Ageing of the population also tends to lower the rate of savings, since older persons typically live on accumulated savings and the community incurs large expenditure for services to them. Further, it places great emphasis on the possibility that economic, cultural and political progress may be retarded where the population is composed of a relatively large population of the elderly (UN, 1973). Population ageing has important implications for social security, health services, provision of facilities for the use of leisure, and other services to elder persons.

Well known is the problem associated with providing various services and facilities for the aged and the requirements for public expenditure which they entail. Foremost among these needs are adequate housing accommodations, health and medical care, and leisure-time facilities. The process of ageing also tends to create psychological and social problems for the individual and society; the aged typically experience increasing isolation from family ties and personal and social relationships, and often suffer psychological effects from abrupt retirement at a fixed age (UN, 1973).

In developing countries such as Nigeria, with slowly but steadily increasing population of the aged, the experiences of industrialized countries

are pointers to what to expect as more and more people age and retire from the work place. Needless to say, the demographic inevitability and the sociological realities of the ageing phenomenon in Nigeria are daunting challenges ahead. Some of the implications mentioned above will start to apply as this process gets under way. More importantly, is the need for Nigeria and other African countries to be proactive with respect to the situation of the aged, and start to plan for them before their size overwhelms government planning apparatus. Whether it is individual or population ageing, both of which are inevitable anyway, government should have the political will to initiate appropriate legislations and programmes to address the increasing number of elderly to be expected as well as the rising age of the large number who will survive. This requires foresight and craftsmanship of unusual proportions, given more compelling competing ends before the government.

In particular, the lack of social security provisions, health services and provision of other services for the elderly in Nigeria requires urgent attention. At present, only Osun, Ekiti and Anambra states have some semblance of social security scheme for the elderly. The breakdown of the extended family which has accompanied industrialization urbanization in Nigeria, as in other countries, has reduced the amount and quality of care and support provided by the family to its elderly. In the absence of suitable and government-subsidized living accommodation, many senior citizens live in deplorable conditions and are scarcely or scantily provided for. Improving longevity also presents a challenge in the sphere of health and medical services, given high cost of treating chronic diseases which the elderly are most prone to.

The characteristic inadequacy in care and support experienced by the elderly in Nigeria compel them to remain in active labour force for a long time, many years after retirement. Nevertheless, as a person ages, efficiency declines and the number of roles which he plays diminishes at the same time that the extent of his interaction with other also shrinks and changes in quality. This process of disengagement has been defined as an inevitable process in which many of the relationships between a person and other members of the society are severed, and those remaining are altered in quality (UN, 1973). Because the elderly are unarguably the custodians of wisdom, experience, patience, breadth of view, stability and judgment, they remain a useful segment of the population who should be planned for by government and the family on whom they had expended their active working years.

With the unmistakable upward trend in ageing of the Nigerian population expected in future, the basic problems which ageing presents both for society at large and for the individual, call not only for more research, but also for practicable and satisfactory solutions. Governments, organizations and public-spirited individuals have roles to play in view of the magnitude of senior citizens expected. The university system should also rise to the occasion and design courses and innovative research that address the special needs of the

aged. It is in this regard that the pioneering role being played by the Dave Omokaro Foundation (DOF), in collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC), is most welcome. This initiative of the Foundation involves the training of Nigerian faculty in applied gerontology, who would in turn train other academics and share knowledge and collaborative research across related and relevant disciplines.

The mandate of DOF is to ensure that the needs of the aged are being addressed, and its major thrust is clearly stated as follows: “Longevity of life is the hope of every mortal, but this comes with its attendant challenges and opportunities. With the challenges seemingly overshadowing the opportunities, the ageing population has been subjected to near abandonment and neglect. Adjustment to an Ageing world is measured in terms of (i) Social Development; integrating older persons into development process; (ii) Quality of life of older persons; advancing health and health care into old age and (iii) Sustainability of Support Systems which translates to ensuring enabling and supportive environment. The achievements of these objectives require skilled and adequate human resources, research informed policies, regulatory capacity, innovative programs including monitoring and evaluating systems. Human Capacity development is therefore pivotal to the reinforcement of the capacity of all stakeholders to understand issues, set objectives and deliver set goals.” (daveomokarofoundation.org/?p=766).

The mission of DOF in the past three years gave rise to strategic initiatives including the collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC). DOF has spearheaded several multi-disciplinary international workshops and conferences to address the need for human capital development and program coordination in the field of ageing and care of the elderly. The partnership between DOF and NUC has recorded successes in stirring public awareness campaigns and involvement of all concerned and relevant stakeholders in the field of ageing. The passion to promote and strengthen capacity building in the field of ageing motivated DOF/NUC to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of North Texas (UNT) USA, for the development of program and faculty as well as research in Applied Gerontology and other fields.

The implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding culminated in the training of 24 Nigerian Academics in Applied Gerontology leading to award of University of North Texas Specialist in Ageing Certificate. The training program was structured in three phases; Summer, Fall and Spring Semesters spanning through 11 months. The summer class held in Nigeria, the fall semester class held online, and spring semester class held at the University of North Texas (UNT) Denton US. Objectives of the capacity building program as outlined as follows:

- Train relevant academic staff of Nigerian Universities for the UNT Specialist in Ageing Certificate in Applied Gerontology;
- Build sustainable capacity for high quality programs in ageing and the production of post graduates with passion, knowledge, skills and

innovative vision for new and globally competitive approaches to policy and service delivering to older persons;

- Strengthen linkages and collaboration on ageing Research between University of North Texas and Nigerian Universities;
- Take advantage of cohort of selected academic staff to promote research clusters in ageing in Nigeria; and finalize the Benchmark Statements and Minimum Academic Standards in Applied Gerontology at Postgraduate levels in Nigeria.

At completion of the training program, the trained academics would be expected to:

- Train other academics, and share knowledge and collaborative research across related and relevant disciplines;
- Help through lessons, research outcomes and experiences garnered from UNT to guide the development of sustainable framework for contextual structure designed to provide support or guide for building and expanding undergraduate unit course in Gerontology and research agenda;
- Take advantage of group synergy formed during the training to develop research clusters.

The publication of this special edition of the *Nigeria Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (NJSA)* on Ageing in Nigeria is designed to key into the DOF initiative. It provides a platform to DOF fellows to begin to think positively about their future contribution in gerontology training and research. We invited all the fellows to submit papers for this special edition of the journal; on the positive side, most of them did, but as would be expected, the papers were mostly reflective since most of them have undertaken no research on ageing at that point. We therefore solicited for empirical articles from scholars working on different aspects of the ageing phenomenon in Nigeria. This collection is not the final word on ageing in Nigeria; it is rather the beginning, on which future research would be built, developed and expanded.

We want to thank all those who contributed papers for the publication, and apologize to those whose papers were not included here. We encourage them to further develop those papers and research ideals to bring them up to a level where they could be published. We are highly indebted to Dr. Emem Omokaro, who graciously agreed to be a part-editor of the papers published here. The Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association is enthusiastic to partner with the Dave Omokaro Foundation and NUC in future to advance issues concerning the elderly in this country. Of course, this publication is made possible by a grant from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND). We believe, working together, we will advance knowledge and policy actions

and programmes that would benefit the teeming population of Nigeria's elderly expected over the years to come.

In the first paper in this collection, Judith Ani undertook an extensive review of care and support of the elderly and anchored her review on theoretical underpinnings of the elderly phenomenon worldwide. Her review found relevance in Nigeria hence she proffered actions government could undertake to ameliorate inadequacy of care and support to the aged. Akinyemi and Akinlo specifically addressed unmet need for care and support for the elderly, examining the available support provided to the elderly by the immediate family including children and spouses in Ilesa, south-western Nigeria. They also assessed the level of unmet expectations among the elderly and factors influencing them. Eboiyehi and Onwuzurigbo interrogated the nature of intergenerational changes in care and support systems for the aged among the Esan. They identified the factors responsible for the changes in the traditional system of care and support, and the strategies adopted by the aged to cope with the identified problems. Emem Omokaro and Ottong investigated the factors of adult children's family size, stage in family life cycle and income as non-cultural variables influencing caregiving behaviour of adult children.

Ibitoye *et al.* engaged the psychological wellbeing of the elderly in Ijumu, Kogi State, determined the prevalence and predictors of good psychological wellbeing among elderly. They provided a baseline for examining the relationship between ageing and psychological wellbeing of elderly thereby facilitating the need for the development of a policy framework for support, interventions and further research. The declining level of care and support of the elderly by the family and community has, among other social ills, given rise to begging by the elderly. This is the focus of the paper by Adebayo and his associates, who examined the social-economic context of begging among elderly in Nigeria. The study demonstrates the relevance of contextual understanding of this social phenomenon, and reveals how such endeavour can be useful for developing effective and sustainable policies. The paper by Osunde and Dokpesi addressed itself to the labour market participation and income distribution of the elderly in Nigeria. They examined various forces that impact on the distribution of household income among the elderly and the changes in the pattern of earning in the labour market as well as changes in occupational choices of the aged and other sources of earnings.

On his part, Hellendendu examined the plight of homeless senior citizens in Nigeria and the hardship they face on the street, and proffered solutions to this problem given the reality of an increasing population of the aged. Fayehun *et al.* interrogated the concept of ageism as applicable in Nigeria. They explored ageism among young people and the extent to which these beliefs match the ways the elderly are portrayed in the media. Using Nollywood movies as an example of media form to which young people in Nigeria are exposed, the study tests the hypothesis that convergence exists in the extent of ageist beliefs and representations in the media among students. The paper by Akanle and Adegun explores the nexus and trajectories of Pentecostalism,

kinship and the elderly in Nigeria. They elucidate the unfortunate association of the elderly with evil in what they call the Sociology of social construction of evil within African contemporary religious systems. Bola Amaike interrogates the relevance of home and community-based services in addressing old age challenges in Lagos, while Mudiare focused on care provided in the Shahuchi Old People's Home in Kano. Graphic revelations from the study showed that other than the scanty accommodation and feeding provided, there are no specialized programmes and facilities to cater for the physical, mental and social needs of the elderly in the home, an indication of gross inadequacies of such institutions in Nigeria.

Dokpesi and Osunde lament over the obliteration of the traditional African reciprocal dependency between parents and children, and provided an assessment of how prevailing socio-economic conditions in Nigeria have impacted children's caregiving obligations to parents in the face of government insensitivity to the welfare of the elderly. A special group of the elderly who may have special needs are ex-servicemen. Kabiru Salami explores their welfare and integration into the society and community life as well as peculiarities in their ageing process. Ajani engages the recreational, physical activities and health needs of the aged. Adopting the continuity theory of aging and theory of selective optimization with compensation, he reviewed empirical works on the interplay of recreation, physical activity and the well-being of older adults, with the view to stimulating further research and insight into the understanding of wellbeing of older adults. Ejikeme and her associates undertook a comparative review of the social support and welfare of older adults in conflict situations with respect to the situations in the USA and Nigeria. Finally, Onyeonoru and Nweke examined the non-contributory pension scheme and post-retirement life of civil servants. Given the challenges pensioners experience in the non-contributory pension scheme before accessing their retirement benefits and the characteristic delays in the payment of pensions and gratuities, including frustrations during screening exercise, the need arises for a better way for retired civil servants to access their meager retirement benefits in peace and safety.

In a nutshell, the demography of an ageing population and the sociology of the ageing process among individuals have opened up a new vista for training and research which will engage the attention of scholars and policy makers in Nigeria for a long time. Given the inevitability of the ageing process and the envisaged large number of the elderly in Nigeria going forward, only proactive and purposeful government policies and programmes would ameliorate the current challenges being faced by the elderly. The implementation of social security scheme for the elderly by Osun, Ekiti and Anambra is a step in the right direction, regardless of the stinginess of the package meanwhile.

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