

Managing the Aged in Contemporary African Society: Ogun-State, Nigeria in Perspective

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Abstract

Little consideration has been given to the effect an aging population would have on the population as well as socio-economic development of the Society. This paper highlights the relevance of management and caring for the aged to population and socio-economic development. It draws attention to the essential of the three theoretical approaches-Structural Functionalism, Theory of Social Change and Disengagement Theory on socio-economic development. It identified Social Change approach as a better method at resolving the care of the aged despite the modernization, industrialization and urbanization that followed. Some problems of the aging are identified and suggestion offered for the sustenance of aging management and corresponding economic development.

Keywords: - Managing, Aged, Contemporary, African, Society, Ogun-State, Nigeria, Perspective.

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, there had been few researchers investigating social gerontology World over and Africa in particular. A few social scientists who investigated have not shown any deep interest to discover the real problem of the aged. This low interest may be attributable to the absolute small size of the aged in Africa. It may also be as a result of insignificance and essentially being impediment rather than active agent to social change, economic emancipation and national development. Hence, the problems faced by the aged population have not received the required attention they deserve in Africa. Consequently, Robert, (1999) confirmed that ``as the 20th century draws closely, an aging population is changing the face of the United States``. He stressed further that as at the time, the American Revolution-(1725-1783) colonists could live up to age 35 and only 2 percent of the population attained the age of 65 or older and that in 1900, the live expectancy for most Americans was 47. Indisputably, this affirms we have few aged population in the United States at this period too.

Contrarily, the small size of aging population in Africa made researchers argue that Africans has no aging population and therefore, attention should be focused on the youth and the economically active sector at the expense of the aging population. This aside, the argument that African societies have inadequate resources and the little

available resources should be directed to positive developmental sectors than those of the aged. Customarily, the aged are believed and supposed to be taken care of by their extended family.

Impressively, one would have thought that health, education, roads and basic infrastructures among others have contributed to the early demise of the youths in Africa. The basic underlying cause of this phenomenon in the United States is yet to be established. Considering the care, health, education and availability of essential basic infrastructure endowed in United States. However, as Africa record improved health facilities among others life expectancy also improved in Africa and in United States. For instance, available data for 1982 showed that Botswana had a life expectancy of 60 years while Kenya had 57 years. The figure for Nigeria was 50 years while Ghana had 55 years. Ogunbodede, (1997).

To clarify the confusion on what is aging, and what age should we consider an individual to be aged. It is necessary to present a definition of aging population. An aging population refers to a lifelong process and varies in its effect on individuals and as commonly defined as beginning at the age of 65. Hess, (2008), on gerontology in Encarta premium explained that since 1920, the number of people living to old age in industrial societies has increased greatly. In the United States in 1990, life expectancy was put at 79.5 years for white females, 72.9 years for white males, 74.7 for black females and 66.8 for black males. Other non-white groups had slightly higher life expectancy. For example, 81.8 years for Native American females, 73.7 for white American males, 86 for Asian females and 79.9 for Asian males. As childhood diseases are eliminated and better sanitation methods are used, life expectancy will also rise in developing Nations.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The study sets to:-

- (a) Investigate the extent to which the social situation of the aged has created enormous challenges in Ogun-State.
- (b) Identify problems associated with aging population and their impacts on the economic fortunes of Africa and Nigeria in particular.
- (c) Identify and ascertain level of social security provided for the aged by the government in Ogun-State.
- (d) Ascertain whether the traditional family members are more responsible for the care of their aged than the modern family members.
- (e) Highlight the roles played by the aged in Ogun-State, Nigeria.
- (f) Make useful recommendations and proffer solutions to the problems encountered by the aged in Ogun-State.

1.1.1 Research Questions

To be able to achieve the objectives of the study, the following research questions are generated.

- (1) Has the aged been catered for by their immediate family members?
- (2) To what extent has the government encouraged social security?
- (3) Are there any fridge benefits for the aged after retirement?
- (4) What is the situational condition of the aged at home?
- (5) What are the problems encountered by the aged in the society?
- (6) Are there ways the modern nuclear family members can be said to be more responsible than the traditional extended family members?

1.2 Importance of the study

For the aged to have a good sense of belonging, be loved and completely acceptable within the community, traditional extended family care method for the aged has to be changed. There should be little or no stress in caring for our aging population if not within a short while, the condition of our aging will have deteriorated to almost a state of destitution. In order to raise the hope of the aged and for the aging to be physically fit, they have to be effectively catered for, fed well and be provided with good clothing, drinkable water, electricity that is constant and a host of other amenities. With this, the aging feel mentally comfortable, balanced and also alerted always. When their care is elevated, the cohort of aging will be better managed. In fact, little or no problem will be encountered within the society.

1.2.1 Theoretical Framework

Aging is a continuous process from birth to death but this continuum varies from society to society. Rosmas, (1983). There is no universally accepted definition of the concept. This perhaps is because there is no universally acceptable criterion for defining certain categories of people as old or aged. For example, the United States Social Security Act of 1935 held that old age occurred at 65 years of age. This was later increased to 70 in 1979, and by 1986, retirement age was abolished altogether. Tout, (1989). In Britain, retirement age was 60 for women and 65 for men, while in Denmark and France; it was 67 and 60 respectively. Hernandez, (1992),

To be regarded as aged, social scientists generally agree that a person must be 65 years or above. Julian, (1980) makes three (3) clarifications in this regards- the first comprised the young old persons – within the age of 64-74. This young is regarded as still being healthy and active. The second includes persons of 75 years and above who are more likely to require support and the third group which he tagged frail aged is made up of people above 85 years who for health and economic reasons cannot fend for themselves without support. Whatever the grouping, the aged are generally referred to as “the senior citizens” “leaders of thought” “cultural forbearers” “custodian of cultural heritage” “Progenitors and Society’s role model”

Physically, the aged is defined with regards to body posture, hair color, voice and ability to see and hear, that is body maturation or what is known as biological and physical changes in the individual overtime. Accordingly, Kessler, (1979) asserts that “physically, an individual’s body does not change in homogeneous fashion for some parts, it may decline sooner than other. Indisputably, UNFPA, (1998) confirms aged is characterized by change in skin, tone and muscle firmness. Traditionally, the aged are expected to be catered for by their immediate families, while they transmit values to the younger generation.

The study intends to utilize structural functionalism, social change and disengagement theory in investigating the aged. The factionist analyst could be traced to sociology and prominently displayed in the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1887) and Herbert Spencer, (1820-1903) two of the founding fathers of sociology. Later was worked-on by Emily Durkheim (1858-1917) and was later refined by Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), Haralambos and Herald (2000). Functionalism views society as a system that connects a set of interrelated parts which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole. However, the failure of one part affects other and leads to social pathology.

Arguably, Dans, (1959) affirms that just as an organization has certain needs which must be satisfied if it is to survive, so also is the society’s basic needs which must be satisfied if it is to continue and survive. However, the limitation of this approach is its assumption that the presence of the aged in every society has basic needs which indicated that it meets the same needs. Put differently, it cannot be assumed that the aged perform the same function in all societies. Corroborating this fact is Marion (1975) who argued that a society would ceased to exist, if its members become extinct, that is, they all die at youth ages and some of them attain the age of 60 and above. Therefore, in order for the society to survive, it must have some means of improving the life expectancy at birth and maintaining the aged population. This means therefore that the functional prerequisite of society and social norms which derive from their value structure and direct behavior in the various institutions of society. The concept of

function in functionalist analysis refers to the contribution of the aged to the maintenance of social order and stability. More specifically, the function of any part of the society is the contribution it makes with the functional requisite of the social system. Thus, the aged is functional and needs to be taken care of.

2. The Theory of Social Change

Many of the founding fathers of sociology were concerned with the general trend of history and meaning. It tend to explain the past development of society and sometimes, to predict its future in terms of a definite pattern. Accordingly, Herbert, (1820-1903) saw the development of society as a process of evolution which like organic evolution is a process of growth increasing complexity, increasing differentiation of structure and function and increasing interdependency amongst the differentiated parts. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) supporting the assertion viewed the society as a process of evolution and progress. He thus formulated this famous law of three states of development of human thought- these are: - the theological, metaphysical, and scientific stages.

Contradicting this optimistic view is Spengler, (1956) opposed and put forth an essentially pessimistic view. To him, human existence is an endless series of ups and downs, liken to ocean waves, the great culture appears, rise to great heights, only to subside again as a life cycle of birth, childhood, maturity, aged and death. The cycle of all these have no cumulative meaning. However, surprisingly, Max Weber`s 1947, theory of social change sees the development of culture as a process of consistently increasing rationalization of growing inner consistency and coherence social change, if it is now held, may originates in any institutional areas, which may in turn make further adaptation in the initial sphere of change e.g. technological, economic, political, religion, ideological, demographic family and stratification. The importance of the theory of social change to this study is basically evident in the fact that the modern aged crisis is a function of urbanization, modernization, and societal development.

2.1 Disengagement Theory

Cumming and William, (1961) propounded disengagement theory to explain how society prevents disruption when the elderly or aged leaves. (or disengage from) that positions of responsibility. It would be disruptive if the aged leave their position or when they die or become incompetent. Consequently, societies use positions to entice the aged to hand over their positions to younger ones. This disengagement is a mutually beneficial agreement between two parts of the society. It facilitates a smooth transition between the generations.

2.1.1 Evaluation of the Theory

Disengagement theory has since come under attack, anthropologist Dorothy, (1992) points out that it contains implicit bias against older people`s assumption that the elderly disengage from productive social roles and tend to sink into oblivion. Her research shows that instead of disengaging, the aged exchange some sets of roles for another. She concludes that researchers with youthful orientation show their bias by assuming productivity as the measure of self worth.

However, not all social scientists agree, leading to their assignment to the normative side of the normative-interpretive continuum that will be described below. It follows from this view that a classification of theory itself is discursive; alternative classifications can be argued. My classification is found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Classification of Social Science Theories in the Field of Aging

Level of analysis	NORMATIVE	BRIDGING	INTERPRETIVE
MACRO	Structuralism, Modernization and aging theory	Interest group theory, institutional theory	Political economy
LINKING	Disengagement and activity theory, `birth and	Life cost perspective, feminists theories,	Critical theory, symbolic interactionism and

	fortune thesis, age stratification perspective		phenomenology, cultural anthropology
MICRO	Role theory, development theory, convectional economic theory and rational choice theory	Exchange theory	Self and identity theories; (continuity theory; career/status passage; dramaturgical)

Adapted from:-Marshall V.W. `Theory of Aging and the Social Sciences` Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences, (4th Edition) Pp 12.

2.1.2. Linking the Theories

On linkage between the theories, Alexander (1988, p. 77) observed, despite profound disagreements, the "younger generation" of sociological theorists is united on one point: "Neither micro nor macro theory is satisfactory. Action and structure must now be intertwined." Elsewhere, (Marshall, 1993, 1994).

3. Analysis of Data

One thousand eight hundred and seventy adults resident in the Twenty (20) Local Governments area of Ogun State were chosen for the social research. This is to make inference from the sample study in relation to the parent population. The data processing serves as a link between data collection and data analysis. This involves two major steps – Editing and Coding. The edition process prepares the questionnaire or interview schedule for the coding process. It involves reading through and checking questionnaire submitted to ensure they are error free.

On the final note, an attempt was made to analyze the respondent's age, sex, religion, occupation, marital status, education and also the response of the respondents in relation to the subject matter of the inquiry through the use of simple percentage.

4. Discussion of Findings

The presentation, analysis and interpretation of data collected are the focus of this chapter. To this end, tables were used to show the frequencies of responses obtained from questionnaires. Percentages with reference to social demographic characteristics of respondents were used. These include – sex, age, marital status, occupation, religion and educational attainment of the respondents to the subject matter will also be made.

Table 1:- Sex Distribution of the Respondents.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	972	52.0
Female	898	48.0
Total	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Figures in the table 1 indicate the preparation of male to female respondents. The result showed that 52% of the sample selected was males while 48% were females; the proportion of the male was greater than that of the female. The difference between the sexes could be attributed to the fact that male are more responsible and more easily approachable than females.

Table 2. Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age (Years)	Male (Frequency)	Female (Frequency)	Total (Frequency)	Percentage Distribution
65-69	438	400	838	44.8
70-74	435	253	688	36.8
75-79	172	172	344	18.4
80 and above	-	-	-	-
Total	1045	825	1870	100

Source: - Field Source, 2009

The above table indicates the proportion of male to female in the respective age cohorts. It showed on the whole that those in the age range of 65-69 years constitute 44.8%. There were no respondents within 80 and above years of age. The age distribution of the respondents further showed there were more males than females in the 65-69 and 70-74 years of age cohorts. Impressively, 75-79 years in which the male and female constitute the same percentage.

Table 3:- Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Single	-	-	-	-
Married	335	460	795	42.53
Divorced	235	130	365	19.54
Widowed	460	99	559	29.88
Separated	-	151	151	8.05
Total	1030	840	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Table 3 above, revealed the marital status of the respondents. Some 42.5% out of the total respondents (both male and female) were married, 19.5% and 29.9% were divorced and widowed respectively. Also, only 8% of the female respondents were separated. Table 3 further revealed that more of male than female were divorced and widowed while more of female than male respondents were married.

Table 4:- Religion of the Respondents

Religion	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Christianity	442	482	924	49.4
Islamic	540	406	946	50.6
Traditional	--	--	--	--
Others	--	--	--	--
Total	982	888	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Table 4 showed that the distribution of respondents on the basis of their religion. It revealed 49.9% of the respondents sampled were Christians while 50.6% of the respondents were Muslims. However there were no respondents (both male and female practicing traditional or other not-too-known religion) the table further revealed that the female respondents were mainly Christians while the male were mainly Muslims.

Table 5:- Education Attainments of the Respondents

Educational Attainment	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
No Education	565	338	903	48.28
Primary	304	190	494	26.44
Secondary	170	109	279	14.94
OND/HND	75	54	129	6.90
University	45	20	65	3.45
Total	1159	711	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Table 5 indicated the educational attainment of the respondents. It revealed that 48.28% of the respondents had no education, 26.44% and 14.94% had primary and secondary education respectively. Regrettably, only 6.90% and 3.45% of the respondents attended Polytechnics and Universities, even with these low percentages, only few females attended these citadels of learning. Accordingly, they commented that their parents believed that a female should not claim same status as the husband. If they do, they could be divorced later in life. Indisputably, more males attended both primary and secondary schools more than female. In Yoruba land, Male is awarded patriarchy right over the female.

Table 6:-Occupation of the respondents

Occupation	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Trading	-	193	193	10.3
Farming	313	138	451	24.1
Driving (Taxi)	236	-	236	12.6
Unemployed/Retired	394	596	990	52.9
Total	943	927	1870	100

Source: - Field Study, 2009

Table 6 indicated the occupational distribution of the respondents. The table showed that 52.9% of the respondents sampled were unemployed/retired, 24.19% engaged in farming. The table also revealed that petty trading and driving are mainly female and male occupation respectively. Indisputably, farming majorly constituted male occupation while female constituted largest occupant in unemployed/retired group.

Table 7:- Respondents Responsible For the Aged in the Traditional Society

Question: - Would you support the view that the Family Members in the traditional societies are responsible for the care of the Aged?

Response	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage
Yes	835	734	1569	83.9
No	173	128	301	16.1
Unaware	-	-	-	-
Total	1008	862	1870	100

Source: - Field Study, 2009

Table 7 above showed respondents view on whether the family members in the traditional societies are responsible for the care of the aged. The data revealed that 83.9% of the total number of respondents supported the view based on the fact that aged welfare care was a communal responsibility in the tradition society. While the remaining 16.1% of the respondents opposed such view as a result of ineffectiveness of the care rendered by family members and that individual's aged children were directly responsible for their parents care.

Table 8:- Respondents View on whether Family Care For The Aged Population in The Traditional Societies Have Changed Recently.

Question: Do you think the Care for the Aged in the tradition Societies by family members has changed recently?

Response	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage
Yes	399	652	1051	56.2
No	479	340	819	43.8
Unaware	-	-	-	-
Total	1030	840	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Table 8 above revealed that 56.2% of the respondents sampled supported the view that the care of the aged in the traditional societies by family members had changed because of the continual increase in rural – urban migration by the youths in search for white-collar job, better standard of living and acquiring increased education, this has had a decreasing effect on aged’s care, arguably, 43.8% of the respondents sampled opposed this view claiming that aged always receive unsolicited care from their immediate family. On the whole, no respondent claimed indifferent to the view.

Table: - 9 Respondents view on whether the Aged in recent time lack the Basic Necessities of life or Not?

Response	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Yes	867	466	1333	71.3
No	201	336	537	28.7
Unaware	-	-	-	-
Total	1068	802	1870	100

Source; - Field Survey, 2009

Table 9 reflected that 71.3% of the respondents supported the view that the aged in recent time lacked the basic necessities of life as a result of the prevailing economic conditions in the country. Coupled with the governments’ insensitivity to the aged predicament. While 28.7% did not subscribe to the view. This could be as a result of the direct care by the family. However, the table reflected that none of the males and females respondents was indifferent to the view.

Table 10:- Respondents view on the Government old Age Security Programme.

Question: How would you rate the Government Old Age Security Programme in Nigeria?

Response	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Adequate	-	-	-	-
Inadequate	439	571	1010	54.0
Partially Adequate	65	65	130	6.90
Partially Inadequate	81	26	107	5.70
Completely Inadequate	402	221	623	33.3
Total	987	883	1870	100

Source; - Field Survey, 2009

Table 10 indicated that 54.0% of the respondents sampled rated the Government old age security program in Nigeria as inadequate, while 6.9%, 5.7% and 33.3% of the male and female respondents rated the government as partially adequate, partially inadequate and completely inadequate. The table further revealed that more of the females than males' respondents rated inadequate while more of the males than females rated completely inadequate. However, from the table, no male or female rated the government old age security program in Nigeria adequate as a result of governments' negligence and insensitivity to the plight of the aged. Evident in inadequacy of basic amenities, Modern befitting old people's home, health care facilities, drinkable water supply and constant electricity to mention just a few.

Table 11:- Respondents view on the kind of health problem facing the Aged.

Question: Which of these health problems do you have?

Response	Male Frequency	Female Frequency	Total Frequency	Percentage Distribution
Eye Problem	413	103	516	27.6
Ear Problem	-	-	-	-
Joints Pain	274	220	494	26.4
Legs Pain	-	408	408	21.8
Bending Problem	81	112	193	10.3
Strength	189	70	259	13.8
Total	450	420	1870	100

Source: - Field Survey, 2009

Table 11 revealed the various health problems facing the aged. The data on the table revealed that 27.6% of the respondents had eye problems. The males tend to be more prone to eye problems than the female respondents as a result of exposure to hydrocarbons from the factory and stress leading to eye problems. Some of the male respondents also said eye problem is hereditary. Some 26.4% of the respondents had joint pains. More of the male than female respondents had such problems which could be as a result of strenuous works done at the earlier stage of life. However, the table revealed that none of the male and female respondents had ear problems.

Interview Conducted and Method Used with Response

Q1 At what age do you consider a person as old.

Ri 70-74 years

Rii 70-80 years

Riii 65-69 years

Q2 In your own view how does one care for the aged?

Ri Constant check-up of their health.

Rii By appointing a maid to help them with house cores.

Riii Adequate infrastructural provision with shelter.

Q3. What do you think are the factors responsible for changes in care of the aged in the traditional Society?

Ri Participation in wage labor outside the family.

Rii Due to Western education.

Riii Introduction of the nuclear Family system

Q4 How would you rate the government Old age security programme in Nigeria?

Ri It is partial.

Rii It is totally adequate.

Riii It is inadequate.

Q5 Do you think the aged themselves are responsible for any of the problems facing them. Such as poverty?

Ri Yes, because of the lack of plan for old age.

Rii No, because the government is not helping matters by not providing adequate provision such as food, shelter, health care and so on.

Riii Yes, because of the aged's low level of education.

Q6 Suggest a way through which you think the problem facing the aged could be curbed.

Ri Government should provide free health care services for the aged.

Rii There should be adequate housing facilities with adequate doctors and nurses to work and treat the aged.

Riii The Non-governmental organizations should also assist the government.

5. Summary of Findings

There is no doubt that all is not well for the country's aged population. Presently, individual aged is being supported mainly by his adult children unlike the past when support came ideally from family members. However, the majority of the children had migrated to urban centers in search for white-collar jobs/greener pastures. This has broken the ties knotting the aged with their immediate family.

This study also indicated and emphasized that the aged should be catered for like babies irrespective of existing relationship. They should be shown love and care. It also confirms that the aged should not be separated from their families whose responsibility is to check their health status always and if need be, get them assisted by paid maids.

Apparently, most aged were at fault in that they do not plan for old age by mismanaging their early-days fortunes, prosperities and savings gotten from wages and salaries received from work done and business ventures when they were still full of strength and energy. Impressively, most too would not send their children to school or train them in paid technical/vocational skill that would help keep them going later in life hence, they portrayed themselves as destitute whose families no more exist but the government can do a lot in these area through the provision of social amenities like good health facilities, good roads, monthly allowance and standard of living enhancement gadgets.

5.1 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are being made to alleviate the suffering of the aged generally.

- (1) There should be provision of good feeding, clothing, housing, mobility and communication (hand set for the aged to contact children, neighbors, and doctor's e.t.c.). This apart, they should be given good health care, old peoples' home with assisting workers to aced to the aged demands all the time.
- (2) The pension scheme and the retirement benefits should be enhanced positively to aid the aged, such that they would be prevented from degradation, discrimination and loss of status.
- (3) Location and localization of industries should be done in such a way that it will prevent the concentration of industries in the urban areas to check rural-urban drift of youths that are supposed to manage the aged.
- (4) Family support schemes should be implemented in such a way that the aged is considered. Life enhancement gadgets like generating sets, computer sets, and farm land equipments - e.g. tractors, tillers and planters, harvesters be provided for those that have chosen to farm. These the First Ladies at the local government councils, states and federal level should include in their Family Support Programs, thereby making life easy for the aged.
- (5) Adequate and accessible recreation facilities should include the aged. This will create as well as enhance inter-generation interaction and cooperation.
- (6) Non-governmental organizations (NGO`s) should also assist the government in ensuring proper management of the aged. This is a way of demonstrating social responsibility.
- (7) As a matter of urgency, government could consider the inclusion of welfare of the aged in the policy formulation and implementation of laws at the National Assembly. Provision and passing of such bill would help minimize the hardship being experienced by the aged.

5.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the position and perception of the aged is presently not encouraging and for them to have better future in the Globalized Era, concerted efforts must be taken by all stakeholders-Aged` children, immediate family, extended family, community and society at large to cater and manage the aged who are role models, socialization agents preserver of societal culture, norms and values and caretakers of children.

The non-governmental organizations (NGO`s) should complement governments` and aforementioned stake holders efforts in helping to efficiently and effectively care and manage our aged population for a better tomorrow.

Endnotes: - *Ogun State:- One of the 36 States in Nigeria, lies within the tropical region of Africa, bounded on the West by Benin Republic, on the South by Lagos State and the Atlantic Ocean; on the North by Oyo and Osun State. It covers a large land area of about 16, 409, 26 square kilometers. Agriculture is the main occupation.

Aging: - Age bracket of 65-75 years.

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