

The Adults and Aged in Nigeria

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Remediating the Old People's Home Prototype by Elder Daycare Facility: A Concept in Elderly Care Initiative for **3** Adoption in the Nigerian Context

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Abstract

This paper examines disposition of the state, the family, and Nigerian citizens in general on support and care of persons 60 years old and older, seeking to establish, as much as relevant to indigenous contextual values, a substitute initiative to the prototype of the Old People's Home. It discusses predetermined unfolding ego - personality peculiarities that mark out the elderly. It seeks remediation of the Old People's Home prototype by an adaptation in Elder Day Care Facility (EDCF), a care giving concept being suggested by the researcher for the Nigerian context. The paper is concluded by recommending the model of care giving, for adoption in Nigeria setting.

Introduction

Nigeria of the 21st Century is still slow in addressing elderly care issues appropriately. Much of available evidence on efforts made on elderly care so far border on propositions by government. Few state governments as well as some NGOs show some interest in bearing the burden of shouldering the concerns of the elderly. Little is known of state government or federal government initiatives or agenda that combine policies with practices that addresses succinctly, the plight of older

persons, relevant to welfare, human rights, entertainment and relevance to the world of work.

Ironically, this group of citizens so labeled are great custodians of knowledge in their own right. They are great custodians of the culture and traditions of a people, as well as possessing a wealth of experience. The elderly or older persons have much information which do complement those possessed by the more agile percentage of the nation. Upon these, the adult percentage of Nigerian population and the youth will build.

Aside from grappling with pension concerns about the retired elderly, otherwise referred to as older persons, much of the needs of these category of citizens go unaddressed. Nigeria does operate a social security system. As a result, older persons and their adult children are left to find out how the elderly survives. Though tax deductions on salaries of adult children purports leverages for adults with elderly dependants, incomes since 1980 do not reflect, for the mass of the people at the lower income level, adequate nutrition, appreciable health index, and comfortable housing. Considering the steady growth in population and the decline in urban social services since 1980 to date, it is right to conclude that citizens now categorized as elderly persons, but who were agile working class citizens three decades ago, have reached the older persons bracket wadding through a hardship lifestyle. It is reasonable to arrive at this conclusion since they have been in the same society all of their working lives.

Other categories of older persons comprises the middle class who have managed to retain the middle class status in spite of the national scenario so described in three decades, or who did become elite by dint of hard work or of chance. Both elite categories of older persons so described, in spite of declining national standards, evidenced by palpable declining growth indices - economic, health, educational - live either comfortably or relatively in comfort in advanced years. Added

to that is the fact that they have probably 'prepared' through careful planning and hard work for a restful, comfortable, retirement, in spite of all odds, assisted or not assisted by adult children.

According to the Ajomale (2007), globally, the greatest increase in the number of older people is occurring in the developing and middle income countries (which are now experiencing rapid shifts from high mortality and high fertility, to much reduced fertility to greater longevity,) and Nigeria is not an exception. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and currently has the highest oldest persons' population in Africa(Kinsella, K & Velkoff, V(2001). As the most populous in Africa and the ninth in the world, it is estimated that by the year 2025 (see table 1), the population of Nigeria aged 60 and above will constitute 6 percent of the entire population.

Table 1: Projected Population Ageing in Africa, West Africa and Nigeria (2005) from 2005-2050

	Population 60+ (per cent)			Population 60+ (million)		
	2005	2025	2050	2005	2025	2050
Africa	5.2	6.4	10.0	47.4	85.8	192.9
West Africa	4.7	5.5	9.0	12.0	21.8	51.6
Nigeria	4.9	6.0	9.9	6.4	11.5	25.5

'Older persons', 'the elderly', and 'senior citizens', all refer to the same category of citizens advanced in years, as of age; found in the 'retired from active work' category of nations. Characteristics that mark out senior citizens as well as their developmental stage are described by Erik Erickson, the ego-psychologist. According to Erickson, in late adulthood, at about 60 years old, sets in the stage delicately referred to as old age, beginning some time around retirement, after the kids have gone. Erikson's theory has it that reaching this stage is a good thing, and not reaching it suggests that earlier problems retarded your development! (Often, also as a result of our youth-worshipping culture, not wanting to acknowledge age, older folks protest and say it only starts when you feel old).

At this stage, the older persons' address the developmental task of *ego integrity* with a minimal amount of *despair*. Initiated by a detachment from society, then from a sense of usefulness, retirement from jobs they have held for years follow; then parenting duties come to a close; and most find that their input is no longer asked for or required. For them a sense of biological uselessness sets in, as the body no longer does everything it used to do. While older women go through a sometimes dramatic menopause, older men may find they can no longer readily, spontaneously, aggressively confront normal daily situations that challenge their physical strength; also for them libido tend to drop or dwindle considerably. Then may follow the illnesses of old age, such as arthritis, diabetes, heart problems, concerns about breast and ovarian and prostate cancers.

As the years advance, comes fears about things that one was never afraid of before - the flu, for example, or just falling down. Along with the illnesses come concerns of death. Friends die. Relatives die. Their spouses die. It is, of course, certain that they, too, will have their turn. Faced with all these, it might seem like everyone that they would feel despair. Little wonder, older persons address the developmental task of ego integrity with a minimal amount of despair.

Both categories of older persons, that is, those that earned low, and lived commensurately so, through working and more agile years of life, and those middle class and elite class of elderly citizens, go through the developmental stage of life so described similarly. Nevertheless, acting for a buffer are senior citizens' preparedness to step into that phase of life, their positive mentality, economic stability, and physical health, overall wellness and support of loved ones, as per welfare, where no social security subsists from the state. All of these are needful for necessary adjustment into the stage Erikson so aptly describes.

From the scenario earlier painted, when aging process sets in, the older persons tend to become subjects of pity, except for these buffers. Because the vast majority of them need physiological support owing to health challenges, and because of loneliness following death of spouses, they become largely dependent on persons in their environment.

Support for The Elderly

Since it is obvious that older persons need some sort of support or the other, as the aging process sets in, and since there is no state policy, programme or initiatives put in place to support them as per social welfare packages, the onus of managing the aging have always rested on their adult children, their grand children, and relations, in the Nigerian context. These persons manage the physically dependent majority of older persons in Nigeria, who ironically, are saddled with daily efforts to make ends meet, owing to the peculiar social and economic circumstances of their nation, as of developing economies.

Ajomale, (2007), pointed out that ageing has become a global phenomenon and indeed a critical policy issue, receiving some recognition by government of developing countries like Nigeria, where it is reflected in the government's vital document of economic and social development strategy. Added to the disintegration of the extended family lifestyle which formerly was a leverage on caring for the elderly, there are some evidence that the traditional practice of caring for parents has begun to erode under harsh conditions of scarcity in urban areas. In many cases, older people were cared for by their children, grandchildren, spouses, siblings, or even ex-spouses. The reverse, however, is the possibility of real hardship for urban elderly whose families had moved away or abandoned them.

Nigeria, like many other developing nations is having many social welfare problems that need attention. On the

picture so painted, however, concerning the disposition of the state, the family, and Nigerian citizens, there have been promising indications of awareness and public debate requiring change and adaptive response to the elderly like other social problems. This have been by advocacy by Non Governmental Organizations and through the existence of a relatively free press combined with a history of self-criticism— in journalism, the arts, the social sciences, and by religious and political leaders.

'Old People's Home' in Nigeria's Context

Known existing homes on elderly care include Old People's Home, Mushin, Lagos, operating for Regina Mundi Catholic Church, Mushin, Old People's Home, Yaba, Lagos; as well as 'Help Old People, Africa' (HOPA), Kaduna, all in Nigeria. Quite a few nations around the world, particularly in the western world, have some sort of program or the other ongoing for their elderly citizens by way of support. The prototype however of the the Old People's Home in those contexts are structures that care for and shelter the elderly till their death; and at which their adult children may pay them visits.

Generally, the Old People's home concept is not traditionally an African concept, rather a concept in the Western culture. Except for the fact that, cross cultural adaptation are features in modernization, the traditional African and Nigerian ways of managing older persons was rooted in the extended family base. In it everyone belongs; parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts ,brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, adult children's spouses, and so on. Care of older persons are undertaken by these members of the extended family. Such care-giving responsibilities include, but is not limited to, cooking meals and feeding, laundry, medical sustenance, provision of basic amenities transportation, providing financial and housing support.

Ajomale, (2007) however, pointed out that added to all that is the decline in the economy, gradual disintegration of the extended family system, unemployment, increasing female employment to complement family income, as well as rural-urban migration all contributing to the noticeable decline level of care giving offered older persons. Also the quick fix procedures in the family, work and society, characteristic of the computer technology age, compels a virtually 'hurried up' lifestyle, which also adversely affect quality of care giving to older persons. A good majority of older persons cannot be hurried up. They need the sort of attention gently accorded children, and intensive medical facility and care, recreation and entertainment.

It is sad that, in over half a decade, post independent Nigeria is yet to enact a National policy on the care of older persons as well as their welfare, neither is there social security scheme policy on old age. Ajomale (2007) agreed that bureaucratic bottle necks have hampered approval of drafts for implementation. The National Social Policy (1989) stipulated the main objective in respect of older persons and allocates responsibilities, yet the policy have proven to be ineffective. Again, sponsored by Nkiruka Onyejocha (PDP, Abia) "The bill for an Act has passed second reading in the House of Representatives, February 3, 2009, moving to create centres in the country that will cater for the needs of the senior citizens and for other matters connected therewith". Old people's homes is inferred. Again it is hoped this will turn out to become a reality.

Innovation of Elder Day Care Facility (EDCF)

Evbuoma (2005) proposed an elder daycare facility, an innovation which can potentially take care of the day time attention - needs of older persons, relieving caregivers of the elderly, while family care givers are at work. Designed to fit in to the attention needs and attention patterns of older persons

that would have been left at home alone during work hours till evening on a daily basis, the elder daycare facility is designed to meet only daytime needs of the elderly. An hypothetical illustration of the Elder Day Care Facility Concept is as follows: Elder ABC, 74 years old one-time civil servant, retired !

Activity 1: Elder ABC wakes up 9.00a.m today as he does daily, when members of his 'family' have already left for the day's work routine.

Activity 2: He drags himself out of bed, gingerly 'carries' himself, brushes his teeth, and takes a warm water (kept for him by his 'family')bath, in readiness for breakfast (kept for him by his 'family'), in anticipation of arrival of bus that picks him up at 10.20 a.m. in company of other older persons *en route* the elder daycare center, a journey 3 kilometers away from home.

Activity 3: Bus arrives at 10.15 a.m; Elder ABC joins the bus, and happily, other older persons on board cheer him in.

Activity 4: Between home and his destination, he is glad to company with persons, his colleagues in terms of age. They exchange information, stories, updates on personal and national issues. In addition, they had had a great ride to the eldercare center. They receive a warm welcome by workers, managers of at the center, 10.30 a.m The day's activities are rolled out as follows in sequence and they include all or some of these:

- i. Health Check by medical practitioners
- ii. Exercise Time by Exercise Physiologists
- iii. Discussion Time-Current Issues, national, local, global
- iv. Reading time - Day's newspapers arrive from vendors
- v. Chat time- Family and personal issues
- vi. Day's lecture on select areas of interest- e. g fund generation
- vii. Entertainment time- Video, T.V series
- viii. Meal time: Light meal/ refreshment, as preferred 4.00p.m
- ix. Miscellaneous e.g. Counselling therapy
- x. Day over- driven back home!

Return trip home: Family picks Elder ABC home or he returns with bus home 5.00pm.

Back home

Day over, he chooses to have a bath, a meal in the company of his family

Day ends

A good night's rest.

While the authors have not suggested in specific terms, the structure of building meant to house an EDCF as per environmental location in which to site them in this paper, this is worth mentioning, briefly. However, structures in terms of type of building, as well as environment to site EDCF must be such built environments in which EDCF care givers will assess materials and human resources that will service the socio-economic, psychological, emotional, medical, physical, and other needs of elderly persons. This is because they are the ones for which the facility are directed; as such, environments best suited for these needs are to be harnessed. The EDCF so conceived by the authors, is meant to be a daily exposure of which an elderly person could enjoy the option of preference to be absent a day or two in a week. It invariably becomes an anti -aging therapeutic encounter for older persons, as well as remediates for the conventional but scanty Old People's Home prototype. It is considered an indigenous form of its prototype adaptable to Nigeria's context.

The summary of therapy that results from participant senior citizen, Elder ABC's participation at the elder day care center, for instance, based on Bio Psycho Social model indices, and which invariably measure overall wellness of persons in question, can be analyzed. This is needful so as to confirm efficacy of the day's exposure, in terms of effectiveness of therapy:

Items addressed on a/the typical day in question will be broken into three component health indices parts, *Psychological health*

needs, physiological or biological needs and social needs. Meeting his mental health needs entails meeting his social needs, while meeting his emotional health needs is embedded in meeting his psychological needs. If the spiritual needs of the elderly person were met alongside others, then together with his or her physical health needs, his or her overall health needs is comprehensively met. In essence, all his or her wellness needs have been met, having been exposed to the events of the day, just by going to, participating in the events at the EDCF environment, and returning from the elder care facility at any given instance. That being so, one comes out with the analyses below:

Activity Carried Out Daily at EDCF	Elderly Persons' Need Met
Exercise Time conducted by Exercise Physiologists	Physiological
Discussion Time-Current Issues, national, local, global	Mental
Reading time - Day's newspapers arrive from vendors	Mental
Chat time- Family and personal issues	Mental
Lectures on Topics of Interest To the Elderly	Bio Psycho Social/ Medical Needs
Entertainment time- Video, T.V series	Social needs
Meal time: Light meal/ refreshment, as preferred 4.00p.m	Physical (hunger)
Miscellaneous e.g. Counseling therapy	Emotional
Day over (return trip)	Emotional/physical/Psychological

Conclusion

Many elderly persons seem to die gradually having no place to go, no sights to see, no exercise for mind or body. Just going round in a circle, they develop arthritis and other physiological anomalies that could be avoided. They need change, as well as alteration of physical body positions. The model proposed on Elder Day Care Facility (EDCF) is worth adopting. The author is of the opinion, that if adopted in the Nigerian context, the resulting effect on overall wellness of the elderly should be worthwhile. Also, that over all wellness of Nigerian elderly citizens should in turn enhance life expectancy.

Recommendations

Workability of the EDCF should be periodically reviewed through questionnaire administration as well as other evaluation indices intermittently for feedback, on its impact. Research should emanate from such documents.

Not only is EDCF necessary as an escape valve for the participant and their families, it is a necessary facility that is considered bio-psycho-socially relaxing and necessary for a wellness perspective on older persons' over all wellbeing. It is therefore recommended for all senior citizens whenever in place.

Aimed at ensuring adequate attention- resources, care, protection exist to cater for old people's needs in order to dispel the fear of the unknown, especially retirement season of life. This show that focus variation reflecting similarity as well as differences.

Government should see the EDCF as a welcome idea if truly her proposal to build old peoples' home is a fact. If it is, then this model (EDCF) is a much welcome option, where the typical old people's home is not welcome, for reason of cultural bias. The proposed concept discussed in this paper, The Elder Day Care Facility, is economically viable in the present economic context of the nation.

Charity organizations, churches, NGOs, individuals, and development agencies working in Nigeria may wish to adopt the EDCF Model concept of elder day care facility, in order to forestall continuity of negligence and abuse of senior citizens. Government also, as well as other stakeholders, should consider the Elder Day Care Facility initiative alternative to the traditionally western old people's home, and a suitable adaptation to Nigerian ethnic cultures around the country.

Adopting EDCF has implication for financial and psychological moderation, in that elderly persons are still able to be in touch daily with loved ones, based on shared responsibility between family and EDCF daily caregivers. The

onus of having a day off attending the elder day care facility lies on individual older persons and their family.

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