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Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Aging among the Aged in Ihitte-Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The major aim of this study was to examine influence of psychosocial factors on aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto or casual comparative research design was adopted for the study. Two hundred and twenty-five (225) old people were selected through random sampling for the study. Self-constructed instrument entitled "Influence of Psychosocial factors on aging in Ihitte Uboma LGA" was used to collect data. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Mean and t-test analysis were used to analyze the data collected for the study. Major findings revealed that lack of security, inadequate care giver, poverty, migration of kids and family members to the urban areas, lack of health facilities and care are the major psychosocial factors affecting aging in the LGA. In all these it was also revealed that women were more influenced by these psychosocial factors than their men counterpart. It was also revealed that self-concept has significant influence on the ageing process of the aged in the area. Based on the findings it was recommended that government should provide adequate security in the villages, as well as provision of adequate healthcare and facilities.

Keywords: Influence, Psychosocial factors, aged, aging process and Ihitte Uboma

1. Introduction

Aging is considered to be a normal process of life which is manifested through many different changes. These changes can be physical, psychological and sociological (Ojukwu & Mpama, 2015). Makinde (1998) described aging in the realms of biological, social and psychological aging. She stated that the biological aging described the typical reduction or loss in capacity of the vital organ in their coping mechanism as age advances. Social aging according to her on the other hand refers to some unwritten expectation of man's behavior at particular chronological ages especially how he acts, how he dresses, his language and interpersonal life styles. The society expects man to conform to particular age grade behaviours. While some people in our society are society older by performing tasks meant for older age-grades earlier and having for example by getting married earlier and gain children earlier, the majority of 'oldies" prefer to be socially younger by dying their hair, bleaching the skin, doing minor face surgery or remarrying (Alao, 1998).

Psychologically, many aging individuals adopt to change environmental demands by maintaining self-control, self-esteem and fostering their abilities by studying in higher institutions at old age where majority of their classmates are much younger (Alao, 1998).

There is also the sociological consideration of aging which considers the person as well as the socio-cultural environment with which he interacts. Aging from the sociological point of view takes into account the attitudes and values of the society as well as the self-conceptions of the individual. Aging therefore from socio-cultural perspective is defined by the value system of society and not by physical deterioration or by time. A person is sociologically old when he is regarded and treated by the members of his society and when he defines himself as being in this category (Reeder, 2015). However, whichever way aging is being considered, it would be better handled and considered in the biological, psychological and social realms hence the consideration of the influence of psychosocial factors on the aging process. How people view and perceive age varies greatly from culture to culture. Depending on cultural norms, beliefs and standards, aging can be seen as an undesirable phenomenon, reducing beauty and bringing one closer to death, or, as an accumulation of wisdom and status worthy of respect.

A lot of psychosocial factors may influence aging. They may include poverty, social isolation, migration of family members to urban areas, healthcare facilities, and social changes. Others may include healthcare awareness, regular medical check-ups, physical exercise, medical care facilities, poor nutrition, and education among others. Furthermore, verbal abuses like *agadi* (old papa or mama) from the younger ones, abandonment, and lack of family care which could be as a result of poverty or migration to urban area as well as stress which could be as a result of trying to make ends meet could be other factors that may influence aging.

These psychosocial factors may influence aging in different ways either positively or negatively. World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) noted that the aged face the challenge of health and medical care, family relationships, economic concerns, care giving, home modification, retirement, nutrition and diet. Also Wikimania (2015) stressed that social isolation, the depiction of old people as weak, frail, dependent, and accusation of old people for witchcraft are some other factors that may influence aging. Access to healthcare is severally limited both by paucity of health facilities and manpower and out-of-pocket payment arrangement. Family support is decreasing as urbanization and migration take young members of the family away to the urban areas in search of job. Again social changes may influence the position of the aged in the society and may lead to a reduction in their social status and influence in the community (Ojukwu & Mpama, 2015).

The above-mentioned factors may cause the aged serious anxiety and stress. One may say that anxiety is a normal experience in everyday endeavour. However, in the case of the aged, this might come as a result of realistic or unrealistic perception of danger. Anxiety may arise in specific situations which the aged may wish to avoid. In many occasions, the aged experience consistent feeling of dread due to expected unpleasant consequences arising from isolation, non-payment of retirement pensions and benefits (John, 2004). Therefore, the aged could experience anxiety which may result from fear and worry about the unpleasant consequences of losing their jobs. Anxiety may also rise as the aged ruminate over their achievements and the areas where they have failed, or where they have little or no hope at all to make headway (Makinde, 1998). Usually, the peak of their thought is the inevitable end of their sojourn on earth, as it dawns on them that one day they may cease to exist; but how, where and when this would happen may send shivers down their spines thereby increasing their fear, worry and stress.

In addition to the above, the self-concept of the aged may also be affected. According to Amadi (2014), self-concept is linked directly to a person's level of anxiety. Self-concept is one's perception or image of the individual abilities and uniqueness. It is a collection of beliefs about ones nature, unique qualities and typical behavior. Individual's self-concept is the mental picture of the individual's self. It could also be said to be a collection of self-perceptions (Amadi, 2014).

According to Sullivan (1995), persons close to retirement (old people) struggle with fear and diminishing life style. They suffer from loss of self-worth or self-esteem and also experience phobia. They cultivate fantasies that tend to destroy their psyche and entire well-being and would wish there was still time to make corrections to these mistakes (Ugwu, 2000). The self-concept includes past, present and future selves. Future or possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they are afraid of becoming (Amadi, 2014). According to Goleman (1995) handling feelings in an appropriate ways helps to build self-awareness. He further stated that people who are low in this ability are prone to feeling of distress, whereas those, who are highly self-aware, are more resilient to life, setbacks and upsets.

Ojukwu and Woko (2016) revealed that over the years, the number of the aged has been on a steady increase and that the rising number has great implications for government, researchers, families, youth and society at large. The issue of aging and preparation for it has been a case of global concern because of the problems associated with it. Unfortunately, not much concern has been shown by researchers in Nigeria with regard to the psychosocial influences on the old (Ojukwu & Woko, 2016). There is need for the researchers in the area to generate enough ideas and information as well as data on the aged and old which will serve and guide government policies that will cater for the increase in welfare scheme for the aged, help the family, and society to face the challenge of devising appropriate ways of taking care of their aged (Agbakwuru 2008). This study therefore was designed to examine the influence of psychosocial factors on aging among the aged in Ihitte-Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of Problem

The aged face so many problems as they go through the aging process. Some of the problems are manifested in the area of health, psychological and economic. These problems may have positive or negative influence or effect on the aged. There is therefore the need for understanding one's psychosocial factors within the age's environment that may influence, aid or affect the aging process as well as the aged with the view of adopting and providing the basis upon which appropriate intervention strategies could be adopted to help the aged adjust adequately to the realties of the age's stage of life. In this respect, therefore, this research was motivated by a good number of reasons including examining the influence of psychosocial factors that may have influence on aging process. Previous studies in the area of old age have not examined influence psychosocial factors may have on aging as the aged navigate the journey of old age or the aging process. Again none has been seen that was focused on Ihitte-Uboma Local Government Area. According to Ojukwu and Woko (2016), given the importance of the study of the aged in the present day, Nigeria as developing nation with a population of over 150 million with about 5.7 percent of them being old according to 1991 census (Agbakwuru, 2008), there is need to carry out this research so as to advance the knowledge in this area and examine psychosocial factors that may influence aging to better understand what could be done to manage aged in the aging process (Ojukwu & Woko, 2016).

1.2 Objectives

The major purpose of the study was to examine influence of psychosocial factors on aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. This is with the view of establishing psychosocial factors that may aid, influence or affect the aged in their aging process.

Specifically the research was designed to:

1. Establish the psychosocial factors that influence aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.
2. Investigate the extent to which self-concept influences aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State.
3. Investigate the effect of gender (male and female) and the psychosocial factors on the aging process among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the psychosocial factors that influence aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria

2. To what extent does gender contribute to any significant differences in the psychosocial factors on aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria?

1.4 Null Hypotheses

1. Self-concept does not have significant influence on the aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female and psychosocial factors on aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The research design of the study was ex-post- facto or causal comparative. It according to Nwankwo, (2013) involve collecting and analyzing data about some variables retrospectively or about some variables which are already in place without manipulating any of them in order to find out how some of them influence or are related to other variables. The research design was considered adequate and suitable for this study because it involved collection of information on psychosocial factors such as self-concepts, gender and so on. The psychosocial factors are already in existence and cannot be manipulated by the researcher.

2.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study targeted all the aged people 65 years and above in the Local Government Area. There was no available statistical data in the Local Government Area that documented the number of the old people within this age category in the Local Government Area (LGA). In any case 22 aged persons aged 65 years and above were randomly selected from each of ten old autonomous communities that make up the LGA giving a total of 220. Three more elderly people were purposively chosen from the larger communities giving a total of 225.

2.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the study was 225 persons made up of 111 males and 114 females. Multistage sampling technique was employed. The selection of autonomous communities and the three extra aged persons that made up the number to 225 were done purposively. In line with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of Nigeria electoral wards. Cluster sampling technique was used to select the 220 persons, 22 from each community made up of 11 males and females from smaller communities and 12 from larger communities.

2.4 Instrument for the Collection of Data

The instrument used for the collection of data was a 21 item self-constructed questionnaire entitled "influence of psychosocial factors on aging in Ihitte Uboma LGA". The instrument was in three parts, sections A-C. Section A was made up of demographic questions such as age, community and son on while section B contained questions designed to elicit responses regarding influence of psychosocial factors on aging. Section C was a 30 item scale on self-concept formulated after five points Likert type of strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree to elicit information on self-concept of the aged. The points of 5,4,3,2 and 1 were assigned to each scale respectively in the questionnaire. The norm is 90 and below scores is negative self-concept while 91 and above is high self-concept.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

Three experts in the College of Education and from the Departments of Psychology, measurement and Evaluation as well as Guidance and Counseling of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, validated the instrument. They confirmed the appropriateness, comprehensiveness and clarity of the items in the questionnaire. Their constructive criticisms and opinions led to the restructuring of some items of the questionnaire which helped to strengthen the face and content validity of the instrument. Its reliability was determined by administering the instrument to two groups of old people numbering 25 each who were not part of the present study. A re-test method with an interval of two weeks was followed to test the reliability of the instrument. The scores obtained were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Co-efficient. An acceptable Coefficient of r=0.76 was obtained thereby indicating that the instrument was adequate for the study. Additionally, a Cronbach Alpha value of r.81 was recorded for the instrument indicating its acceptable internal consistency.

2.6 Administration and Scoring of Instrument

The instrument was self-administered to the participants with the assistance of three research assistants who were my Master's students and were briefed on the administration procedure. Some of the respondents had the instrument interpreted to them before they made their responses. The instrument were all collected, coded and scored. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research question while t-test was used to analyze the hypotheses. Mean cut-off point was 2.5. All items with mean of 2.50 were regarded as agreement and accepted while those with less than 2.50 were regarded as disagreement and rejected. In effect the responses were either accepted or rejected as a psychosocial factor influencing aging of the aged.

3. Results

The findings of the study are presented in this section.

3.1 Psychosocial Factors that Influence Aging

The first research question was, "What are the psychosocial factors that influence aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria?"

To establish the psychosocial factors that influence aging in the LGA, the respondents' mean scores and standard deviation were analysed. The mean cut-off used was 2.50. All items with mean 2.50 and above was regarded as agreement and accepted for the purpose of the analysis as psychosocial factor influencing the aging process of the aged.

Table 1. Mean rating and standard deviation of the psychosocial factors influencing aging of the aged in Ihitte Uboma LGA

Factors that Influence Aging	N	TOTAL	M	SD
Migration to Urban area	225	825	3.60	1.12
Healthcare facilities	225	808	3.59	0.96
Poverty	225	404	3.57	1.03
Security from the town leaders	225	842	3.74	1.01
Family care	225	819	3.64	0.87
Payment of pension	225	446	1.98	0.63
Lack of healthcare awareness	225	864	3.84	1.22
Social isolation	225	451	2.00	0.61
Accusation of witchcraft	225	532	2.36	0.72
Religious integration	225	458	2.03	0.68
Nutrition/balanced diet	225	720	3.20	0.70
Physical exercise	225	781	3.47	0.93
Regular medical check-up	225	792	3.52	0.95
Verbal abuses/derogatory terms	225	802	3.36	0.93
Abandonment	225	533	2.36	0.62
Education	225	826	3.67	0.98
Stress	225	854	3.79	1.11
Caregivers	225	854	3.79	1.08
Living condition	225	536	2.38	0.63
Visitations by former colleagues	225	794	3.53	0.96

As stated above mean cut-off point was 2.5. All items with mean of 2.50 were regarded as agreement and accepted while those with less than 2.50 were regarded as disagreement and rejected. In effect the responses were either accepted or rejected as a psychosocial factor influencing aging process of the aged.

Table I above shows results obtained from answering the research question one for the study. Following from the data on table I it could be safely concluded that some psychosocial factors that influence aging of the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria include healthcare awareness with a mean score of 3.84, stress and care givers with mean scores of 3.79 each, security from the leaders of the community and government with a mean score of 3.74 as well as education with a mean score of 3.67. Others are family care and youth members' migration to the urban areas, healthcare facilities, verbal abuses of the aged as exemplified in calling them of names like *agadi* old papa and

mama (derogatory names) poverty, poor nutrition or balanced diet, physical exercise, poor medical check-up as well as visitation by former colleagues.

3.2 Gender Contribution to Psychosocial Factors Affecting Aging Process

The second research questions was, "To what extent does gender contribute to any significant differences in the psychosocial factors on aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria?"

To verify the extent to which gender contribute to differences in the psychosocial factors affecting aging process, male and female, mean scores and standard deviations were analyzed and the result of which is summarized in table 3 below:

Table 2. Mean rating and Standard deviation of influence of gender on psychosocial factors and aging process (n = 111, male; 114, female)

Contributing Factors	Male			Female		
	Total	M	SD	Total	M	SD
Migration to urban areas	407	3.66	1.12	436	3.82	1.21
Healthcare facilities	390	3.51	1.14	114	3.66	1.13
Poverty	380	3.42	1.68	410	3.59	1.10
Security	387	3.48	1.07	428	3.75	1.24
Family care	402	3.62	1.18	428	3.75	1.24
Payment of pension	193	1.73	0.58	211	1.85	0.62
Healthcare awareness	378	3.40	1.01	417	3.65	1.12
Social Isolation	163	1.46	0.63	436	3.82	0.71
Accusation of witch craft	116	1.05	0.61	436	3.82	0.76
Religious integration	310	2.79	0.71	414	3.63	0.81
Nutrition/balanced diet	338	3.04	0.99	405	3.55	1.03
Physical exercise	392	3.53	1.11	408	3.57	1.05
Regular medical check-up	373	3.36	1.11	408	3.57	1.01
Verbal abuses/derogatory	373	3.36	1.97	407	3.57	1.01
Abandonment	408	3.68	1.04	270	2.37	0.71
Education	403	3.63	1.04	406	3.56	1.14
Stress	402	3.62	1.07	428	3.75	0.83
Care givers	406	2.65	1.05	434	3.75	1.02
Living condition	230	2.07	0.84	388	3.40	1.19
Visits by former	266	2.39	0.81	393	3.44	1.21

Results from Table 2 show gender mean and standard deviation differences of psychosocial factors affecting aging process. From the table, it can be safely concluded that women are more affected by the following psychosocial factors in their aging process than their male counterpart: migration to urban areas with a mean of 3.82 as against a mean of 3.66. Healthcare facilities, poverty, security, family care, healthcare awareness and social isolation, others are accusation of witchcraft, nutrition/balanced diet, physical exercises, regular medical check-up, verbal abuses-derogatory terms and abuses, stress, categories, living condition and visits while men are more affected by abandonment with a mean of 3.63 as against 2.37 for women and education only with a mean of 3.63 as against women with 3.56. In all, the result shows that women are more prone to the effect of psychosocial factors where they have higher mean scores than their male counterpart and vice-versa.

3.3 Influence of Self-concept on Aging

Ho1: Self-concept does not have significant influence on the aging process of aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria.

To verify the authenticity of the above hypothesis a t-test analysis was ran and the result of which is summarized in Table 3:

Table 3. T-test analysis showing self-concept influence on aging process among the aged in Ihitte Uboma LGA.

Self-concept	N	M	SD	df	t.cal	t.crit	Decision
Negative	121	83.81	19.18	223	9.039	1.96	Supported
Positive	104	54.52	18.74				

The result of data analyzed showed that a negative self-concept had mean of 83.81, SD = 17.18 while positive self-concept had mean of 84.52, SD = 18.74 with t-t-critical = 1.96. Since t-calculated is higher than t-critical, it implies that

the null hypothesis was rejected and its alternative accepted. Thus, self-concept significantly influences aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma LGA of Imo State.

3.4 Influence of Gender on Psychosocial Factors

Ho2;   There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female on the influence of psychosocial factors on aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma LGA.

To verify the above hypothesis a t-test analysis was conducted and the result of which is presented in Table 4:

Table 4. T-test analysis showing gender influence on psychosocial factors on the aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma LGA

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t.cal	t.crit	Decision
Male	111	3.03	0.95	223	3.57	0.455	Not supported
Female	114	3.50	1.02				

The data on Table 4 shows that there was t.calculated value of 3.57 and a p.value of 0.455 which is greater than 0.05, thus the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female on the influence of psychosocial factors on aging process of the aged in Ihitte Uboma is retained.

4. Discussion

The main motivation of the study was to examine the influence of psychosocial factors on aging among the aged in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. This is with the view of establishing psychosocial factors that may aid or affect the aged in their aging process. It was found that the major psychosocial factors that affect the aged in their aging process in Ihitte Uboma LGA as per the old peoples' opinion were healthcare awareness, stress, care givers, security, education, migration of youth and children to urban areas, and poverty among others. From the findings, it was revealed that lack of healthcare awareness posed the greatest influence on the aging process of the aged. This is so because majority of the aged in the LGA who are 65 years and above have low level of education and as such have limited knowledge of healthcare facilities available that may aid them in event of sickness. Besides, some of their children or family members' relations, who could have helped, have migrated to the urban areas in search of their own livelihood. It follows that the above factors which have mean 2.50 and above influence negatively the aging process of the old since there were no adequate provision of them in the LGA.

Another major factor that is worth mentioning is stress. This may be as a result of verbal abuses, poor habit of exercise, poverty, problem from some of their care givers as well as lack of security from the government and local community leaders. All these give the aged serious cause for concern and increase their psychological stress. In the villages where some of the aged reside there has been very high incident of kidnapping, armed robbery attacks and so on. In many cases, these old people have been victims and as such they live in constant fear and anxiety. This increases their levels of stress. In addition to all of the above, the findings are in line with the report of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) which stated that the aging pattern for the individual depends on the society the individual was raised, the alcohol abuse, infectious disease, nutrition, poverty, access to education, work condition, violence and healthcare. Findings also revealed that women were more prone to be affected by the above psychosocial factors than their male counterparts.

Other findings of this study revealed that self-concept significantly influences the aging process in the local government area. This result means that old people with negative self-concept will manifest strong stressful conditions in the sense that they do not have self-worth for themselves due to the fact that they might have lived their lives without any meaningful planning for the future hence lack of care by the family members and migration of the family members to the urban areas and abandonment in the village. Besides, such people also may have been affected in the general economic crunch which is prevalent in the country as well as the stress they experience from the care givers and lack of medical care and facilities. On the other hand, those with positive self-concept were found to be positively influenced and had not much difficulty in their aging process. The possession of positive self-concept enabled them to have self-confidence which aided their ability to plan and better manage their aging process. This finding supports the view of Goleman (1995) who stated that handling feelings in an appropriate way helps to build self-awareness and that people who are low in this ability are prone to feelings of distress, whereas those who are more resilient to life have setbacks and upsets.

Further findings of the study showed that there is no significant difference in the perception of psychosocial factors between the aged male and female in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area. However, the aged females are more influenced by the psychosocial factors than their male counterparts as could be seen from their mean result of 3.50 and 3.03 respectively. This supports the report of World Health organization (WHO, 2015) which stated that aging process generally differs between men and women due to their different mind, body and their emotional capacities.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Agbakwuru (2008) stressed the importance of proper understanding of the nature, problems and coping strategies of man at each stage of life. Ojukwu and Woko (2016) added that the above is essential as it provides the basis upon which appropriate intervention strategies could be adopted to help man adjust adequately to the realities of his stage of life. This is with the consideration that the population of the aged world over is on the increase with little attention paid in the respect of research in the area. In another research, Ojukwu and Woko (2016) studied management strategies adopted by the aged in the management of their aging problems and challenges with the view of getting data and results that will assist family members, government and significant others of the aged to understand better the need and problems of the aged and what should be done to help them manage the demand of their aging process. This study is a further attempt in this regard which will help the family members, government and so on to know what the aging process is like and how they can get along with and enrich the lives of the aged people in their midst. This will be possible when the psychosocial factors that influence aging are known and highlighted.

Findings showed that the major psychosocial factors that influence aging in Ihitte Uboma LGA are lack of healthcare awareness, inadequate caregivers, lack of security of live, low level of education, migration of children and family to urban areas, poverty and so on. It was also revealed that self-concept significantly influenced aging process of the aged and finally there was no significant difference between male and female aged people in their opinions on effect or influence of psychosocial factors on the aging process.

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

(1) Since it has been found that many psychosocial factors influence aging including security and poverty, government and community leaders should put adequate arrangement in place to check incessant kidnapping and armed robbery attacks in the villages.

(2) Adequate welfare arrangement should be put in place to take care of the aged in our society. In this regard N20, 000 monthly arrangement and allowance is recommended to be paid to the aged by the various tiers of government.

(3) Government should encourage the formation of non-governmental organizations with biased in the education of the aged with regard to creating awareness especially in the area of healthcare, exercise and related matters.

(4) The various layers of government in the country should increase effort in the provision of healthcare facilities especially in the villages and as practically as it is possible enable the aged to access it free.

(5) The various families that have aged people in the villages should endeavor to put adequate arrangement in place for the care and welfare of their aged ones in the villages.

(6) For the aged themselves, they should endeavor to develop positive self-confidence or high self-concept. This will help them to realize themselves and tackle problems that come their way. They should also develop and engage in physical exercise.

When all these are done, they will go a long way in addressing the psychosocial influences on the aging process of the aged.

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