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Participation of the Older Adults in Community Development Programmes and Projects in Enugu State, Southeast, Nigeria.

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Abstract
Demographic changes have turned out a larger number of people surviving into old age in many societies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast, in their communities' community development programs, these older adults have tended to be disempowered, structurally dependent and excluded in public services. This study tries to evaluate the involvement of older adults in community development programs and projects in Enugu State, Southeast, Nigeria, against this background. The ageing theory of the social environment has been adopted as the theoretical orientation. In addition, the multi-stage sampling techniques were used during the questionnaire and interview guide. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed statistically using simple percentages and frequency tables while IDI information was analyzed thematically. Study findings showed a low participation of older adults in community development programs in the state of Enugu. A higher percentage of respondents attributed these older people's low participation in development projects to their diminishing physical and financial capital (62.1 percent and 70 percent respectively) and low social interaction performance (56.3 percent). The findings of the study also showed that some cultures limit youth participation as part of their culture. Similarly, the presence of older adults in the nation's political events distracts their focus from making meaningful contributions as many of them live outside their neighborhoods. The study put forward some recommendations, including the need to address preferences such as socio-economic status, cultural restrictions and other policy issues.

Keywords: *Community, Community Development, Older Adult, Participation, Project and Programme*

Introduction

Older adults continue to be exploited in many parts of Africa in terms of infrastructure programs and community development projects compared to the rest of the population. According to Hughes (1995), the low involvement of older adults in community development programs has been expressed over many decades of social work policy and practice, with older adults accessing Cinderella services in terms of quality of welfare provisions. As older adults in Africa have traditionally been seen in a more positive light as repositories of information and wisdom, their involvement or participation in community development programs and projects needs to be given greater importance.

Human beings are believed to be able to achieve an individual and collective self-actualized existence. This means that each individual is able to engage in critical discussion, reflection, and critical assessment in order to change their lives that may be based on a participatory approach to community development. In a rapidly changing world like the U.S., where change is part and parcel of culture, older people's experience is often considered obsolete when computers are delegated to store information. There, data can be stored indefinitely by

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automated machines that can provide faster and more reliably required information than the human brain. This runs counter to the Africa situation.

The concept of community participation simply means the nature of sharing ideas making decisions and assuming responsibility for implementing community development projects designed to solve their problems. It is one of the fundamental human rights and principles of democracy that encourages people to contribute to projects that affect their lives. As stated by Masayoshi, Kawachi, Ashida Kondo, and Kondo (2018), involvement in community development offers access to various services such as education, relevant information, emotional and instrumental support for individuals. In other words, it promotes better maintenance of day-to-day activities and cognitive functions.

Bonye, Asoglenang, and Owusu-Sekyere (2013) thought that taking into account the fact that community development seeks to evoke collective interests and expectations for individual and group gains, engagement is therefore its driving force. Participation is associated with human development, according to the researchers, and enhances the sense of control of people over issues that affect their lives, helps them learn how to plan and execute, and encourages them to get involved at regional or national level on a broader front. This breaks the alienation of people and lays the foundation for them not only to have significant developmental power, but also to have greater autonomy and control over their lives.

Similarly, Akukwe (1996) claimed that, in order to have meaningful community development, the system must be structured to promote conditions for social, cultural and economic change through an organized approach with focus on mobilizing all available resources, thus ensuring the participation of the people benefiting from the programme. This means that the government should implement changes for national development as a whole; international organizations can provide favorable conditions, financial and technical development assistance, but real progress or improvement must come from the citizens themselves.

Nonetheless, Walsh, Scharf, and Keating (2017) noted that there is a strong denial of land, rights products, and services as people age and their unwillingness to engage in many events and community programs as a result of changes in the aging population both in Europe and Africa. This seems to affect the quality of life of older people and the aging population as a whole's wealth and stability. On the other hand, Ahmed and Jahan (2000) argued that community involvement could include funding generation activities that could be a starting point for transparency, reducing reliance at external support and fostering sustainability. This suggests that there is a social or economic challenge facing the significant role and engagement of older adults and other members of society in community development programs in many cases. In addition, it is also possible that the degree to which a person has social ties in the community will decide the probability of individuals engaging in community development programs.

Riley and Riley (1994) noted that the assumption that societies are stratified by age which affects the individual's attitudes, behaviours and expectations could also affect their participation in community development programmes. In another development, since the elderly are generally more involved in political activities compared to the younger ones, the sense of co-ownership of the project may be lacking and then poor participation. Many of them are so much attached to the development of urban centres to help them realize their political ambition. Moreover, likely, the absence of a well-articulated national policy on community development participation may have posed a unique challenge to the participatory approach in community development projects and

programmes in Nigeria and other Africa countries. Generally, people may be willing and ready to participate but become discouraged probably by the attitudes and actions of the external agencies who fail to respect and listen to the people.

Most studies on community development participation, in particular, focused on its relevance and activities involved in health, sanitation and water supply (Adams, 1999, Ahmed & Jahan, 2000, Kyong, 2001 &Masayoshi et al, 2018). It is not to the knowledge of the Researcher that studies on the participation of older adults in community developments programmes and projects in Enugu state had been done. It is against this backdrop that this study becomes highly imperative in filling the knowledge gap as it relates to the participation of older adults in community development programmes and projects in Nigeria. Older adults in this study were restricted to all those (men and women) within the ages of 60 and above. This is the generally accepted age in which the individual is expected to rest or retire from employment life and other activities in preparation for the ultimate disengagement of death. According to, Velkoff and Kawal (2006), 60years and over was adopted by the United Nations as the standard definition of old age worldwide. Even though we adopted the term older adults in this study, we recognize the individual differences among this group of people.

In doing so, the study had the following objectives;

i. To find out the extent of marginalization of older adults in Enugu state on community projects participation.
ii. To find out the relationship between physical health and participation in community development programmes and projects.
iii. To ascertain whether the socio-economic status or financial resources of the older adults determines their chances of participation.
iv. To find out the effect of social relationships on older adults participation in community projects.
v. To find out the relationships between age stratification and cultural restrictions on participation in community development projects.
vi. To ascertain whether the involvement of older adults in the national political activities has influence on their participation in community development projects and finally.
vii. To make some recommendations based on the findings.

Theoretical Orientation

The study was anchored on Social Environmental theory. According to, Gubrium (1972) and Barry (2007), this theory emerged as a result of the explanatory problems of activity and disengagement theories of ageing. The major tenets of this theory according to the theorists, lies in the person/environmental transactional process to explain the behavioral changes observed in ageing. It asserts that values and beliefs generated in a particular situation have great control over the individual. Since the present generation seems to be faced with a series of unique environmental dilemmas, the participation of older adults in community development programmes and projects will help them test their self-worth and adaptability. In other words, the sense of competence and wellbeing of this segment of the society is enhanced while marginalization and social exclusion are buried.

Study Setting

The study was carried out in Enugu state which is located at a very large expanse of a fairly land within Southeast Nigeria. The state was created on August 27, 1991, with Enugu as its capital city. Its name was derived from the capital city, Enugu which was established in 1909 as a small coal-mining town, but which later grew to become the capital of the former Eastern Region of Nigeria (Ministry of Information, 1992). The state is predominantly occupied by the Igbo ethnic group with some pockets of Igala speaking communities of Ette in Igbo-Eze North local government area, Ogurugu and Ojjor in Uzo-uwani local government areas respectively. Enugu state shares borders with Abia state and Imo state to the south, Ebonyi state to the east, Benue state to the Northeast, Kogi state to the Northwest and Anambra state to the west. There are 17 local government councils in the state which make up the three senatorial districts of the state; Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu east senatorial districts.

Enugu state is implementing the World Bank Assisted Community and social development projects which has the objectives of increasing access by the poor to improve social and natural resources infrastructural services in a sustainable manner. Since 2016, more than 400 autonomous communities had benefited partly or fully from the N10 million earmarked for every community to execute a development project of their choice. However, who is to participate or not to participate is at the discretion of the community.

Methodology

The cross-sectional survey research design which involves multi-stage sampling techniques were employed with a questionnaire and structured interview (IDI) as instruments for data collection. In the first instance, Enugu state with 17 Local Government Councils was stratified into three in line with the three senatorial districts of the state (Enugu North, Enugu South & Enugu East). Each of the senatorial districts was further clustered into communities and two communities chosen from each cluster through balloting. Again, from each of the communities, 15 respondents were selected using systematic random sampling from the registers of Town Unions or General Assembly of each community and administered with a questionnaire. An in-depth interview was also conducted with 5 participants each from the three senatorial districts who were executive members of Town Unions randomly picked through balloting. Respondents in both the questionnaire and interview segments were between 60 years and above. Thereafter, data collected were coded, processed and analyzed using frequency Tables and simple percentages while information from in-depth interviews was thematically done.

Results

Out of 90 respondents administered with a questionnaire, 87 were recovered while 3 were mutilated and wrongly filled. The analysis was based on 87 questionnaires that were properly filled and returned.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (N-87)

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	45	51.7
Female	42	48.3
Age (in years)		
60-64	41	47.1
65-69	27	31.0
70+	19	21.9
Marital status		
Single	-	-
Married	68	78.1
Ever married	19	29.9
Employment status		
Actively working/business	12	13.8
Retired	75	86.2
Income (per annum)		
Below N100,000	16	18.4
N101,000-N500,000	52	59.8
N501,000+	19	21.8

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2019

The number of males and females were comparatively close to each other (51.7% & 48.3% respectively). A greater percentage (47.1%) were within the ages of 60-64 while (31.0%) were 65-69 years while respondents fell within the ages of 70years and above; 78.1% were married while 29.9% were ever married. Equally, a greater proportion (86.2%) of the respondents have retired from working life or active business while only 13.8% were said to be inactive employment or business; 59.8% were within the income level of N101,000—N500,000, 21.8% N501,000 and above while only very few respondents (18.4%) were below N100,000 per annum.

b. Specific Issues

Table 2: Respondents view on the relationships between physical health or agility and participation in community development projects (N-87)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	54	62.1
No	20	23.0
Don't know	13	14.9
Total	87	100

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2019

The results from Table 2 above show that 62.1% upheld that there was a positive relationship between physical health and older adults' chances of participating in community development projects while 23% spoke otherwise,14.9% had no opinion.

Table 3: Respondents view on whether socio-economic stands or financial resources of the older adults have a role to play in community project participation (N-87)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	70
No	18	20.7
Don't know	8	9.3
Total	87	100

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2019

A great majority of respondents(70%) upheld that there exists a positive relationship between older adults' financial resources and participation in community development projects,20.7% had a contrary view while 9.3% had no opinion. Many of the IDI participants equally toed this view. One of the participants said;

> If you don't have money, you are of no relevance in any form but once you're financially loaded, everybody will bow and you become the chief launcher and overseer of any development project in the community. Emphasis on virtually everything has turned to money.

Another participant stated; "don't expect that you will be called one day to participate in any community development project if you have no money to donate, chairman here means chair money".

Table 4: Respondents view on whether social relationships have any effect on older adult's participation in community development projects (N-87)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	56.3
No	30	34.5
Don't know	8	9.25
Total	87	100

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2019

56.3% of respondents admitted that older adults' social relationships have a positive role to play in community development projects; 34.5% had a contrary opinion while 9.2% could not disclose their views. A male participant who toed a similar view stated;

> Our intimate relationship with members of our community is necessary and counts a lot; this is the last opportunity we have to contribute to the progress of our community, we are almost passing out and shall no longer sit on the fence.

Table 5: Respondents view on whether the involvement of older adults in political activities of the nation affects their participation in community development projects (N-87)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	51	59
No	26	30
Don't know	10	11
Total	87	100

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2019

Results from the above table(Table5) shows that 59% of the respondents were of the view that active participation of the older adults in political activities may not give them rooms for full participation in community development projects while 30% had a contrary opinion,11% maintained no knowledge.

Discussion

Community development is a mechanism through which individuals are conscious of their ability to improve themselves. In other words, people are involved at every stage; planning, implementation, and evaluation. Nevertheless, in many communities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, they are listed as "endangered species" in spite of the wealth of experience, knowledge and ability of older adults to provide valuable advice on various issues related to community development projects.

In this study, we found that the rate of participation of older adults in community development projects is minimal. A greater percentage of respondents (62.1%) however attributed the low participation of the older adults in community projects to their declining physical health. This finding corroborates the view of Olaleye (2011) that old age is associated with more diseases manifested in the form of chronic diseases and long-standing illnesses. On the other hand, 70% of respondents thought that the low socio-economic status or dwindling financial resources of the seniors may have been the major cause of their low involvement in community projects. Ahmed and Jahan (2000) noted that finance generation is one of the key issues in community development participation as it helps to remove the dependency on external support and promote sustainability. Moreover, many of the older adults are retirees of public/private organizations and others who are no longer active in their businesses, hence their probability of being in a low-income group that cannot make huge financial donations to community projects. The majority of the participants in the IDI also concurred with the finding. One of the participants stated, "Once you don't have any financial stake, you are irrelevant no matter how lofty your ideas could be".

It was also captured from the study findings that the low quality of social relationships maintained by the older adults had been a potent factor for their low involvement or participation in community development projects. A reasonable proportion (56.3%) made the revelation. This agrees with the submission of Ginika (2010) that in time of old age, the predominance of interactions and relationships are more restricted to family members and friends. The inability of the older adults to cope with the stress involved in a series of meetings and deliberations or reaching the external agencies may pose a limitation to their participation. On whether the involvement of the older adults in the nation's political activities has any effect on their participation in community development projects, 59% of respondents upheld the view. Members of the group likely see their involvement in community development projects as a distraction from the pursuit of their political ambitions. One of the IDI participants aligned to these findings and stated thus; 'most of our political juggernauts in this community are living in Abuja and other major cities and are not interested in what happens in the infrastructural facilities of the community, how can you involve such a person?. This according to Chukwukere (1995) tantamount to the distrust of thinkers committed to meaningful radical social change in community development programmes.

Again, the effect of restricting the participation of people to certain age brackets as spelled out in the culture of many communities was also captured from the study findings. The majority of participants in the interview segment confirmed that in almost every community's participation in community projects are mostly undertaken by the youths. It is assumed that the youths are in a better position to cope with the stress involved and they are more current with the emerging social changes.

It is clear from the above findings that older adults are highly marginalized in the participatory approach to community development programmes and projects in Enugu state which may not be different from what is obtainable in other parts of Nigeria. This may be one of the reasons why some of these senior citizens describe themselves as a 'threatened race'.

Conclusion

From the above discussions, findings of the study have shown obvious exclusion of older adults in the workings of community development projects in Enugu state. Respondent's opinions suggest that the low participation of older adults in the community development programs and

nitiatives is due to many factors including their diminishing physical endurance, decreasing inancial resources, reduced social networks, cultural constraints, involvement in political activities amongst others.

Furthermore, taking into account the indispensable role played by older adults due to their wealth of experience and expertise, a more detailed analysis of the presence of older adults across different sectors of the Nigerian society is required to promote the creation of a comprehensive national development plan as the aging population is growing worldwide.

Recommendations.

The following recommendations were made;

i. Workshops and seminars or public lectures should be organized regularly to resolve the negative perceptions and stereotypes meted on the aged.
ii. Gerontological studies should be included as one of the general study courses undertaken in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
iii. The government and other bodies including NGOs should devise a way of appreciating the aged.
iv. There is a need to develop a uniform and comprehensive policy framework for community development participation in Nigeria.

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