

CIVIL SERVANTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEIR AGED PARENTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA: COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the civil servants' attitude towards the aged in Ibadan metropolis. The research design employed for the study was a descriptive survey method. Three hundred civil servants who were randomly selected using purposive sampling procedure participated in the study. An instrument tagged Civil Servants' Attitude towards their Aged Parents Inventory (CSATAPI) was used to elicit response from the participants. Three research hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected were analysed using t-test and ANOVA statistics. Findings revealed significant difference in the attitude of civil servants towards the aged on the basis of gender. Findings also showed no significant difference in the attitude of civil servants towards the aged on the bases of age and religious affiliation. It is recommended that guidance counsellors should develop a model of comprehensive programme for the aged persons. Even if the government at all levels provide for all the physical needs of the aged persons, the various governments can never supply the psychological nourishment that the aged required from trained guidance counsellors.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Aged Parents, Religious, Counsellors

INTRODUCTION

The increasing presence of elderly people in the world is making people of all ages more aware that people live in diverse and multi-generational society. It is no longer possible to ignore ageing regardless of whether one views it positively or negatively. It is this noble cause that the International Federation of Ageing Nigerian (IFAN) is pursuing to mainstream ageing within the context of current global development initiatives (Iroegbu, 2007). The ageing process is not uniform for everybody. The ageing rate varies from person to person according to the state of health, body constitution, personal life-style, the type of routine activity in which a person is engaged, dietary habits, physical activities and so on. The rate of ageing could be proportional to the amount of wear and tear to which persons are exposed as posited by Brown (2000). For instance, those activities that tend to over-flog the body such as excessive peasant farming, trekking long distances or being "sentenced to hard labour" generally without any compensatory diet will accelerate ageing.

Sociologists and psychologists are primarily concerned with the socio-psychological impact of ageing and retirement. This is in line with Falaye (2001) and Falaye (2009) who describe psychological ageing as changes in the latter part of life that are clearly seen more in the processes closely related to biological – functioning such as age-related decline in sensory functioning, such as visual acuity which affects almost all other sensory – perceptual functions. This is why most people across the world today exhibit some psychological nervousness at least covertly, when the count-down to old age starts in earnest. This phobic and neurotic fear is understandable mainly because of the attitude of people towards the aged

and most importantly because death is regarded as the next door neighbour to old age even though it is believed that death can take life at any age.

The Nigerian culture, especially the Yoruba culture, teaches respect for elder as one of the key elements. However, that age long tradition seems to be disappearing nowadays. This is why most young people currently view the aged as nuisance, intellectually deficient and aimless in mind. This summarizes the way the aged are viewed and treated by the younger ones in the society currently, civil servants inclusive. This is further corroborated by Winsensale (2000), who submitted that youths of the present day Nigeria appear not to have much respect for the elders as they become more and more self-centred, and disrespectful of adults. However, it seems the aged themselves have negative attitude towards ageing as they are in most cases not prepared for it. As a result, when they grow old, they act the way the society has stigmatized them to act (Sanni, 2007). But above all the aged should be honoured and respected.

Ageing is a lifelong process because individuals begins their ageing process at the moment of birth and go through the life course accumulating a range of experiences that may positively or negatively affect their capabilities and well-being in later years (Iroegbu, 2007). Olowookere (2003) sees ageing as a universal phenomenon that is both obvious as well as inevitable and that it can be observed as a consistent pattern of changes that every human being undergoes, starting at a very slow rate at around age 30, progressing at a more rapid rate beyond age 60. Austard (1997) opines that ageing is the slow deterioration of those portions of the body system that allow individuals to respond adequately to stresses. He further regards the ageing process as the progressive deterioration of virtually every bodily function over time. In this same vein, Akume, Ayuba and Obeya (2008) are of the opinion that ageing is the process by which certain systems of the body begin to close up and their response to natural stimuli slows down. They also conclude that ageing is the process of drawing nearer to the end of the life span. There have been various interpretations on the concept of old age. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) groups the years of 45–59 as constituting mid-life; 60–74 as older and of 75 and above as the very old. In another vein, Denga and Udoh (2005) are of the opinion that middle age starts from 41–55 years, old adults from 56–74 years while gerontology starts from 76 years and above. Ihedioha (1998) is of the opinion that old age cannot be measured by chronological age or a specific retiring age, that underdevelopment with its associated poverty and overburden of work could cause the terms of “exhaustiveness and old”.

The term ageing is somewhat ambiguous. Distinctions are here made between “universal ageing” (i.e. age changes that all people share) and “probabilistic ageing” (age changes that may happen to some, but not all people as they grow older, such as the onset of Type Two diabetes). Chronological ageing, referring to how old a person is, is arguably the most straightforward definition of ageing and may be distinguished from “social ageing” (society’s expectation of how people should act as they grow older) and “biological ageing” (an organism’s physical state as it ages). There is also a distinction between “proximal ageing” (age-based effects that come about because of factors in the recent past) and “distal ageing” (age based differences that can be traced back to a cause early in person’s life such as childhood poliomyelitis (Browling, 2005 & Falaye, 2009).

The rate of ageing varies from person to person, various social, biochemical; medical, economic, psychological, cultural and dietary factors tend to influence the rate of ageing. For instance, Denga (1996) is of the view that social reasons may be responsible for growing old rapidly. He observed that among the rural agrarian communities, particularly in Nigeria, social and economic pressure may accelerate a child’s maturity because of the compelling

need for him to assume adult responsibilities. Children may, in many cases, be forced to generate a family early or start working much earlier than they are due. He added that “a child who has to start work early in order to serve as a financial tower for a poor family is thus rushed into maturity and may start wearing the appearance of a full adult too soon. Also, some forms of social participation may accelerate the ageing process. For instance, the massive expenditure of body substance through reckless social activities such as indulgence in excessive alcoholism, unbridled sexual activity and smoking may lead to premature ageing (Oyediran, 2009).

Many researchers have come up with a number of theoretical formulations to explain the aetiology or the basis of the human ageing process. Among these authorities are: Nwoye (1990), Miquel (1991), Olowookere (2003), and Denga and Udoh (2005). The theories are broadly divided into two-biological theories and non-biological theories. Biological theories of ageing include: Cellular-based theory, Orgel’s catastrophe theory, Evolutionary theory, Calorie-restriction theory, free-radical theory, neuro-hormonal theory, stress adaptation theory and integrated theory. While non-biological theories of ageing include disengagement theory, activity theory; selectivity theory and continuity theory of ageing.

One of the theories of ageing that is biological in nature is integrated theory which concerns itself with how long human being should live. The scientific calculation of how long humans could possibly live is derivable from a zoologically-based formula. In mammals according to Olowookere (2003), it was experimentally found that if the time taken for the skeleton of a particular mammal to grow to maturity is multiplied by 5, the result shows the life span of that mammal. Thus because the dogs growing period is 3years, its life span is $3 \times 5 = 15$ years. Human skeleton growth is complete in 25years and so a fair estimate of our life expectancy is $25 \times 5 = 125$ years. An estimate of 120years to 125years has been used as working figures by scientists.

There are a lot of signs in the society showing that ageing is a problem. In almost all the streets in major towns in Oyo State, hardly can a day passes by without seeing old people begging for alms, this is the evolution of a strange culture in the society which may be due to the fact that a lot of children abandon their aged parents. On page 48 of The Nation on Sunday (September 28, 2008), it was vividly revealed that the Nigerian governments and the society neglect the aged ones. It was revealed that Nigeria today has no special place or respect, honour and dignity for the senior citizens (the aged) but celebrate those who have defrauded the nation or gotten rich through major fraud and corruption. That government assiduously strives to cheat the aged (senior citizens), deprive them of their legitimate rights, privileges and honour because they believe that the aged are weak and unable to fight for them. This is more pathetic when senior citizens (the aged) have no children or successful children of their own (Abiodun, 2008).

The effects of attitudes and beliefs about ageing have been observed in various areas of science, from biological to sociological. In biological domain of ageing research studies have shown that older individuals’ beliefs about ageing can have a direct impact on their health and longevity (Levy et al, 2000: b: 2002). In the first study of its kind, Levy et al (2000b) showed that negative attitudes towards ageing heightened cardiovascular response to stress whereas positive attitudes towards ageing exerted a protective effect, bringing their physiological changes back to baseline levels. The study suggests that negative attitudes towards ageing may contribute to health problems in the elderly without their awareness. This could lead to elderly individuals mistakenly attributing their deteriorating health to the inevitability of ageing, which may then reinforce the negative age stereotypes and prevent successful ageing (Levy et al, 2000a). Promotion of positive ageing attitude could serve as an

intervention strategy to improving cardiovascular health in the elderly and also plays an important role in an elderly individual's physiological state which could also influence longevity (Levy, 2002).

Other psychology-based studies have found that perception of age in the elderly has an impact on psychological functioning. Specifically, it was found that older individuals who perceived their age as younger than others of the same age had more internal control, which has been related to more positive functioning. Internal control refers to the extent to which an individual sees their outcomes as being dependent on their own efforts and abilities as opposed to external circumstances or chance or fate (external control) (Luin & Hunter, 1979). Across various spheres of science, positive attitude towards ageing have been shown to positively influence memory performance, longevity, health, well-being, life satisfaction, will-to-live and other physiological and psychological functioning in the elderly (Levy, 2002).

On the issue of attitudes towards the aged on the basis of gender, it is often argued that the burden of care for the aged falls more heavily on women (daughters) than men (sons). Women are regarded as the most active members of kinship networks and play a 'kin keeping' role as pointed out by Rosenthal (2005). Daughters are regarded as more appropriate than sons as carers and are brought up with an ethic of care and develop greater relational capacities than sons. (Gilligan 1982; Choderow, 1987, Tronto, 1987 & Evans, 1996;). Accordingly, women might be expected to stress the responsibilities of families to care for older parents more than men.

On the other hand, precisely because women carry more of the responsibility of care they may be more reluctant to see elder care as a family responsibility. Choderow (1987) was still of the view that there could be gender differences in attitudes about filial responsibility and at the same time that there could be no differences between men and women in their attitudes regarding the responsibility of adults to their older parents except that there used to be a sex difference in attitudes on only one item – men placed more weight than women on the obligation of adults to help their parents financially if needed.

In the same vein, Thomas (1996) reported that the care of the elderly parents was the responsibility of the family as opposed to a government responsibility. Also, that in the cultures where the welfare state is weaker, families will be more inclined to assume responsibility for the care of the elderly since they have not been accustomed to relying on the resources of the state or government for these matters, Nigeria is a typical example.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recognition of the uniqueness that unfolds throughout one's life is core to igniting society's embrace of the contributions of its older citizens. The "package" of knowledge, wisdom and experience that so often come with age is part of an inner awareness that cannot be traded, sold or stolen. So as people live longer, healthier and more active lives, an ageing population also offers opportunities that must be harnessed. But in Nigeria, the aged parents are usually being confronted with so many problems from their children especially civil servants such that these aged parents are usually being neglected and isolated in the rural areas. Their (civil servants) work consumes a lot of their times and this does not give them the time for their parents. In most cases, parents are neglected.

Their children (civil servants) used to pay them occasional visits at the festive periods only. It was against this background that this study was conceived to investigate the attitude of civil servants towards the aged parents in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo State, Nigeria. This is coupled

with the fact that in Nigeria today, are problems of neglect, poverty, health, loneliness and lack of effective policies for the aged or older generation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate civil servants' poor attitudes towards aged parents in Ibadan metropolis with a view of proffering solutions to the menace.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of civil servants towards aged parents in Ibadan metropolis?
2. Does gender influence the attitude of civil servants towards aged parents in Ibadan metropolis?
3. Does age influence the attitude of civil servants in Ibadan metropolis towards aged parents?
4. Does religion influence the attitude of civil servants in Ibadan metropolis towards aged parents?

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were generated to pilot the study.

1. There is no significance difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of gender
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of age.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents, among civil servant sin Ibadan metropolis on the basis of religion.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was restricted to civil servants who are on the payroll of Oyo State Government in Ibadan metropolis. Similarly, the study was interested in variables of gender, religious affiliations and age of civil servants. The researcher visited the ministries used for the study and administered the questionnaire on the civil servants.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study would be of immense benefits and provide the necessary information to the aged parents, their families or carers, counsellors and governments. The outcome of the study would assist the aged parents on how or what they can do to make them grow old slowly so that they would be able to experience successful ageing.

Family members or carers will be aware of the travails of the aged and be informed adequately of what are expected of them in caring for their aged parents bearing in mind that they are also going to be in the shoes of these aged people later in life.

The counsellors would also have the opportunity of being exposed to the various problems (or travails) that are associated with old age and take the appropriate steps towards reducing them in their clients, family members and the community.

Governments would also be aware of the fact that they need to formulate or design appropriate policies with an ageing society in mind. This may be by providing the necessary supports for the aged at all levels.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey method. The survey method was considered appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to gather information on the variables in the study and test the significance of the differences that may exist and thereby draw inferences. The study was carried out in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was used to sample the subjects for the study. A total of 300 civil servants who have aged parents or have taken care of aged parents one time or the other were selected for the study from five ministries. Sixty civil servants were randomly selected from each of the ministries. The ministries used are Finance, Education, Health, Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs and Agriculture and Natural Resources. The five ministries comprised of 2160 civil servants out of which 300 respondents were selected for the study representing about 13.89% of the total population.

Research Instruments

The research instrument used to collect relevant data for the study was a self-designed questionnaire tagged Civil Servants' Attitude Towards the Aged Inventory (CSATAI). The inventory has two sections A and B. Section A sought for information on the personal data of the respondents while section B sought for information on the attitude towards the aged. CSATAI inventory has a 4 – point rating scale of Much like Me (MLM), Like Me (LM), Unlike Me (UM) and Much Unlike Me (MUM) with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Validity of the Instrument

The most vital property of a measuring instrument is its validity and it answers the basic question of whether the items of an instrument reflect the significant aspects of the purpose of the investigation. Thus validity can be described as the extent to which an instrument measures what it sets out to measure. It represents the degree to which measured variables sample the potential domain of conceptual variable of interest (Falaye, 2009; Abiola and Oyewo, 2013). To ascertain the face and content validity of the questionnaire, the researcher presented the initial drafts of the instrument to five other colleagues in the departments of educational psychology and curriculum and instruction of Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. Some useful corrections and suggestions were made which the researcher effected in the final draft of the instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

The researcher used the test-retest procedure to establish the reliability of the CSATAI inventory. The instrument was administered twice to 20 randomly selected Civil servants who were not from the ministries used for the study within an interval of four weeks. The two scores from the sample were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation formula. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient value of 0.72. This was adjudged high enough for the instrument to be used for this study.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher with the assistance of other four colleagues personally visited the five ministries used for the study. Some items that were not clear to the respondents were explained to them.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using t-test and one way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics as applicable to the stated hypotheses 1 – 3. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of gender.

Table 1. Results of t-test comparing attitude of civil servants towards aged parents on the basis of gender

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Cal. T-value</i>	<i>Critical t-value</i>
Male	132	44.73	7.96	298	2.50*	1.96
Female	168	42.18	9.33			

*Significant $p < 0.05$

The result on table 1 reveals that there was a significant difference in the attitude of civil servants towards aged parents on the basis of gender. The calculated t-value of 2.50* is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected because the difference in the attitude of civil servants based on sex towards the aged parents was significant ($df = 298$) = 2.50; $p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan Metropolis on the basis of age.

Table 2. ANOVA summary table showing the results of difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of age

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sum of Square (SS)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square (MS)</i>	<i>Cal. F-ratio</i>	<i>Critical f-ratio</i>
Between groups	173.35	2	86.67	1.11	3.00
Within groups	23180.43	297	78.04		
<i>Total</i>	<i>23353.78</i>	<i>299</i>			

The results in Table 2 indicate that the value of the calculated f-ratio is 1:11 which is less than the critical f-ratio of 3.00. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of age was accepted. This shows that there was no significant difference in the attitude of young and old civil servants towards aged parents in Ibadan metropolis.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the attitude towards aged parents among civil servants in Ibadan Metropolis on the basis of religion.

Table 3. ANOVA Table showing the results of difference in the attitude of civil servants towards aged parents in Ibadan metropolis on the basis of religion

<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sum of Square (SS)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square (MS)</i>	<i>Cal. F ratio</i>	<i>Critical f-ratio</i>
Between Groups	174.76	2	87.38	1.12	3.00
Within Groups	23179.02	297	78.04		
<i>Total</i>	<i>23353.78</i>	<i>299</i>			

The table shows that the calculated f-ratio of 1.12 is less than the critical f-ratio of 3.00; therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. This means that there was no significant difference among civil servants in Ibadan metropolis in their attitude towards their aged parents on the basis of religion.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In hypothesis one, the findings of this study revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of civil servants towards aged parents on the basis of gender. It is quite true because it is often argued as stated by Rosenthal (2005) that the burden of care for the elderly falls more heavily on women (daughters) than men. Women are the most active members of kinship networks play a “kin keeping’ role. This idea is also supported by Evans (1966); Gilligan (1982); Tronto (1987) who asserted that daughters are regarded as more appropriate than sons as caregivers and that they are brought up with an ethic of care, and develop greater relationship capacities than sons. Also, women might be expected to stress the responsibility of families to care for older parents more than do men. This is shown on table 1 with the means of 44.73 and 42.18 for male and female respectively. On the other hand, precisely because women carry more of the responsibility of care, they may be more reluctant to see elder care as a family responsibility. Choderow (1978) states that men and women hold identical attitude regarding the responsibility of adults to their older parents but that there used to be a sex difference in attitudes on only one item – that men placed more weight than women on the obligation of adults to help their parents financially if needed.

The results of the findings in hypothesis 2 indicated that there is no significant difference on the basis of age of civil servants in their attitudes towards their aged parents. Both young and old respondents have the same attitudes towards aged parents. The attitudes are both negative and positive which are having some effects on the aged parents. Today in Nigeria, there is no special place, respect, honour and dignity for the senior citizen (aged) but celebrate those who have defrauded the nation or gotten rich through major fraud and corruption (Oyediran, 2009). At the same time, especially in the past, old age used to be highly respected and the aged used to be obeyed almost like God. His gray hair was revered and cherished by both adolescent and adults and they were then placed in the highest ladder of family strata (Denga and Udoh, 2005).

In hypothesis 3, the results indicate that there was no significant difference among civil servants in their attitude towards aged parents on the basis of religious affiliation. They all have the attitude that the care of the elderly parents should be seen as a family responsibility as opposed to government responsibility. The result of the study was supported by Thomas (1996) who claims that the care of elderly parent was a family responsibility and that in the culture where the welfare state is weaker (or non-existence) like that of Nigeria, families will be more inclined to assume responsibility for the care of the elderly since they have not been accustomed to relying on the resources of the state or government for those matters irrespective of whether one is (i.e. respondent) a Christian, Muslim or African religionist.

IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

This study revealed that there is need to create awareness on the issue of the aged parents and the attendant crisis and needs. It is no longer possible to ignore ageing, regardless of whether one views it positively or negatively. The findings of the study showed that there is difference in the attitude of male and female civil servants towards their aged parents. This means that there is the need to organize group guidance and counselling for the civil servants irrespective of the gender by the counsellor on the right attitude expected of whoever have aged parents to

take care of. They should be made aware of the effects of positive attitudes as well as negative attitude towards the elderly or the aged.

Rational emotive education should be introduced by the guidance counsellors to combat and possibly eliminate feelings of loneliness or helplessness on the part of the aged. Such an educative programme can also be organized for the civil servants in order for them to be aware that the aged ones should not be isolated.

Counsellors should organize individual and group counselling session for the elderly or aged parents on the joy and benefits of being aged and how to adjust to their new life situation, the aged need adjustment skills to live a meaningful life style. There may be the need by guidance counsellors to organize seminars/workshops on how to grow old gracefully since everyone is expected to experience old age if given the opportunity or the grace.

CONCLUSION

Consequent upon the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

There was no significant difference on the basis of age in the attitude of civil servants towards aged parent. This revealed that both young and old adult respondents have the same attitude towards aged parents. It was also revealed that there was a significant difference in the attitude of civil servants towards aged parents on the basis of gender. This result showed that the burden of care for the elderly falls more heavily on women (daughters) than men (sons).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since ageing is a process that everybody has to pass through given the grace, the aged therefore are not to be pitied no matter how great their problems are. Guidance Counsellors are expected to develop a model of comprehensive programme for the aged persons. Even if the government at all levels provide for all the physical needs of the aged persons, the various government can never supply the psychological nourishment that the aged require from trained guidance counsellors. It is therefore recommended that counselling centres should be established and funded at every local government areas if not in all communities throughout Nigeria to care for the aged or senior citizens.

1. There is the need for establishment of support system in numerous forms that range from the formal to the informal for the aged persons in every locality. These may be based on local communities' membership, cooperative ventures, company-based schemes and some may be provided by the state government and through welfare programmes.
2. It is also recommended that other state governments should emulate Ondo State government that inaugurated aged persons scheme to citizens aged over 65years by giving them certain amount of money every month (that of Ondo State is ₦5, 000.00 per head now).
3. There should also be the provision of funding for nursing homes and community care services for the aged at various local government areas.
4. Organization of workshops/seminars on caring for the aged or the elderly should be carried out at regular intervals by the government making use of guidance counsellors, psychologists and social welfare specialists as resource persons as well as medical personnel.

5. Construction of geriatric centres in all the government hospitals to care for the elderly people is also recommended.

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