

Increasing Number of Older Persons National, Regional and Global Prospects

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Abstract. The study gives a concise submission on global effort in addressing the increasing number of older persons; such as Vienna 1982 and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2002 by the United Nations. The paper presents the concept of global ageing that proved the increasing and continual involvement of older persons in societal issues and institutions such as family, job, retirement, crime, sports and romance. Besides, ageism that concerns prejudice against older persons that cut across academia, commerce, education, international organizations and social institutions, proved that the increasing number of older persons is not getting the needed attention. Therefore, the paper advocates for national, regional and global effort on ageing. The position of the paper is that nations should set up commission for ageing while regional bodies like the African Union should have a commission for ageing ditto for United Nations that will globally blanket the issues of ageing. These become necessary as the United Nations even the African Union do not have a designated commission on ageing; while the number of older persons continues to increase. Finally, it gives recommendations on how best to mainstream the global efforts

Keywords: Ageing, Wellbeing, Sustainable Development, Gerontological, Retirement

1. Introduction

Internationally ageing has been on the United Nations agenda since International Plan on

Ageing was adopted by the United Nations member states in Vienna, Austria in 1982. In further development of this, a new International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted by 159 countries at the United Nations Second Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain in April 2002. These were done to address issues in relation to increasing number of older persons.

However, in the last few decades research indicates that older persons in the world today are not getting the required attention in relation to their increasing population. Giving credence to this International (2005), reports that the MDGs have specific targets on children and youths but silent on the issue of ageing. The argument is that there is neglect of issues concerning older persons on the world agenda.

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nation's initiative that is designed to transform the world by 2030 has no specific agenda for older persons. The Sustainable Development Goals has seventeen Goals with 169 targets and is to replace the Millennium Development Goals. There are seventeen goals which have replaced eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 17 goals are: no to poverty; zero hunger; good health and wellbeing ; quality education; gender equity; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy ; decent work and economic growth; industry innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities ; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action ; life below water ;life on land ; peace justice and strong institutions ;

partnership for the goals. These are set of goals to be achieved by 2030. But, none of the goals specifically addresses the issues of older persons. From the above submission it can be argued that for the next twelve years or more the seventeen goals are to drive and guide global efforts on issues relating to poverty, gender, housing and climate. These are contained in 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015. Furthermore, from submission of scholars and international organization such as United Nations (2015) poverty, social exclusion, material disadvantage and other debilitating factors have contained and ravaged older persons especially in the developing countries; while, older persons in the developed countries grapple with problem such as isolation and depression.

For more than four decades, the issue of increasing number of older persons has been a major concern of global organizations. This is evident from the United Nations convivial on ageing in Vienna, Austria in 1982 and was followed by Madrid, International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2002. The concern is that longevity has consequently increased the number of older persons and a number of social institutions have been affected. Hence, the issues of ensuring wellbeing for older persons have become important. From the submission of Help Age International (2002), by 2050, it is likely that 1 out of 5 people in the developed nations of Western Europe, North America and more than 15 percent of the population in many developing nations will be 65 years and older.

Furthermore, United Nations (2015), gives a demographic report on the increasing number of older persons. From the report, it was gathered population of older persons is to grow by 56% (901- 1.4billion) in 2030. By 2030, the number of older persons is to outnumber that of children 0-9 (1.4 billion - 1.3 billion) while this will outnumber that of adolescent 10-24 years (2.1 – 2.06 billion). Besides, older persons that is, 80 years and above is to grow from 125 million to 202 million by 2030 and 434 million by 2050. The statistics is to affect every country of the world and it can be argued that developing countries such as Nigeria is involved. In

addition, over the next 15 years, older persons' population is to grow by 64% in Africa; 71% in the Caribbean; 66%; in Asia; Oceania is to experience 47 % increase; North America is to experience 41 % and Europe is to have 23% increase. Besides, by 2050, 44% of world population will be living in relatively aged country. Therefore, life expectancy is to increase in the years to come. In Europe, Latin America, North America, Caribbean and Oceania, life expectancy is to span for years while Africa is to be 70 years by 2050. This segment brought to the fore the global statistics of increasing number of older persons.

The conclusion is that the number of older persons in the world has increased more than ever before and will continue to increase. Therefore, it is important to identify means of addressing challenges posed by the growing number of older persons in every stratum of the society. From this expected number, older persons are playing and are expected to play remarkable roles in social and economic institutions. Therefore, this study brought to the fore issues in relation to global ageing; denial of right to older persons in relation to academic, commerce, international organization and social institutions. Finally, the paper justifies the essence of national commission; regional commission such as African Union Commission on Ageing (AUCA) and United Nations Gerontological Programme (UNGP) and make plausible suggestions on their actualization.

2. Global Ageing

This segment of the paper addresses the issues of global ageing it concerns increasing involvement of older persons in societal issues that has warranted the need for increased global attention for older persons. From monitored reports, it has been discovered that older persons are increasingly getting involved in issues that are once presumed to be the exclusive activity of the younger generation. The contemporary ageing population has given rise to new occurrences that are consequences of increasing number of older persons. This segment of the paper presents the increasing activity of older persons in societal issues. From the submission

of Omotayo (2017), a number of reports point to increasing activities of older persons in economy and social institutions in general.

According to Adeyi (2015), an 80- year old man was arrested in Lagos state for arms possession. Similarly, another 80- year old man with 71 other individuals was arrested for gunning running. In addition, an 82 years old man was remanded in prison for 41 million fraud in Ibadan, Oyo State (The Nation 2018). Besides, Onyegbula (2018) reported that a 60 years old man was caught after dumping his lover's corpse in Ajanbandi, Lagos State. In Agege, Lagos state a 60 years old driver defiles her own daughter (Folarin 2018) While in a related case, Oloker (2015), reported discovery of fifteen thousand ghost pensioners by the Federal Government of Nigeria. From the submission above, the concept of crime is no longer within the purview of younger generation. But older persons are getting more involved in crime such as fraud and violent crime like armed robbery.

However, it is not only in crime that older persons are getting involved but are also getting involved in social issues that was once uncommon to the population group. This includes sports that demand high level of energy that is usually absent in older persons. Adewale (2015), asserts that an older person, Mieko Nagaoka at 100 years old completed 1,500 meters of swimming competition in Japan. Adewale (2015), reported that Harry Nelson from United States of America is a 90- year old man who has appeared mostly in the Olympics Games for 18 times; the last was in 2012. While, Diana Gihum at 100 years old is the oldest Olympics torch bearer (Adewale 2015). The Punch Newspaper (2010), reported that a 64-year old pensioner, on the 15th of April 2010, suffered seizure and died on the queue in an attempt to buy 2010 World Cup Ticket in Cape Town, South Africa. The submissions above depict the fact that older persons in contemporary times are active participants in social activities such as sports and exercise have been discovered to address boredom among older persons which is beneficiary to them (Omotayo 2016).

In relation to love and romance, older persons are active actors. Vanguard Newspaper (2015), reported that an 84- year old Italian divorced her 88 year old husband owing to erectile dysfunction and reduction in sexual intercourse to three times in a month. While a 75 years old man committed suicide because the wife is unfaithful in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria (Ojumadu 2018). Such occurrences point to the fact that age is not an inhibition to sexual enjoyment. Furthermore, the issue of divorce, as reported above, has become inter-generational as it cuts across all generations.

From monitored reports older person are getting involved in exclusive issues that are once exclusive reserve of the younger generation such as child bearing. Presently, owing to scientific breakthrough older persons are becoming mothers. Nanlong (2018), reported that a woman in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria delivered a baby after 38 years of marriage at the age of 64 years old. Similarly, Alagbe (2018), reported that a 66 years old woman give birth to a baby in Abeokuta, Ogun State Nigeria.

Economically, older persons have been found to be economically-viable and from the submission of Omotayo (2014), increasing number of older persons is an asset and not a liability owing to increasing participation and influence of older persons in social and economic institutions. Furthermore, according to Adeoye and Alagbe (2016), labour workers are against the Federal Government for investing their pension funds on infrastructure .The report shows the economic importance of older persons as their funds is huge to the extent of being used for infrastructural development. Giving credence to this presently the pension funds is over 8 trillion naira. (The Punch 2018) about the same amount as the proposed budget of Nigeria in 2019. Besides, pensioners which majority are older persons are becoming activists and social crusaders in ensuring human rights. According to Atoyebi, (2016), pensioners gave the Oyo State Government ultimatum before money was released to pay the arrears of pensioners. Besides, in Ondo State pensioners demonstrated over allegation of diversion of pension funds by the State Government and have not been paid for

six years (Akingboye 2018). Attah (2016), reported that two pensioners died in Benue state during protest over 11 months unpaid arrears and in Delta State, pensioners protested owing to retirement benefits (The Punch 2017). While a 75- year old man suffered stroke owing to unpaid pensions of fifteen years after working with the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing. (Afeez 2018).

According to Onuba (2018), twenty three (23) States are yet to comply with contributory pension scheme. All these show that older persons are no longer passive about issues that concern them especially, retirement benefits. It can be argued that in an unprecedented manner, older persons are becoming pressure group within the society. In addition, government in Nigeria, made effort in paying retirees but the government still defaults. From monitored report Nigerian government is defaulting about 67 billion naira in pension payment (The Punch 2018).

In relation to education older persons are becoming active participants. Adesomoju (2016), reported that an eighty year old man became a graduate from the Nigerian Law School. The submission above points to the fact that older persons are also getting involved in cerebral activity such as education at tertiary level. Owing to the expected increase in the number of older persons, the United Nations (2002), did advocate for the inclusion of ageing in higher institutions curriculum. This shows the increasing number of older persons as a generic phenomenon that provokes world attention.

The submission above, presents issues such as economy, crime, sports, unionism, education, and parentage in relation to increasing involvement of older persons in societal issues that has proved the need for concerted attention towards the population group at national, regional and global level.

From the submission above, it can be concluded that the increasing participation of older persons in social and economic issues and its effect on social and economic institutions has provoked and open new frontiers for policy formulation

and informed decision within the social milieu. Hence, there is need to readily address challenges that emanate from increasing number of older persons through informed policy and decisions. Giving credence to this, the United Nations (2015), advocated the need for government to ensure that development plan in critical areas such as housing, employment, health care and social protection in general should be designed to adequately accommodate the increasing number of older persons. This is because the increase in the number of older persons has not only affected social and economic issues in general, but has consequences on a number of social institutions that will influence social and economic direction. (Omotayo 2014).

3. Ageism in Contemporary Society

The concept of ageism, process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old (Butler and Lewis 1973) has been identified in a number of issues within contemporary society practises. Ageing being a natural process comes with frailty that demand special attention and care of older persons but monitored reports and submission of Omotayo (2015), identified ageism within the fabric of the society, the society has continued to give limited attention to issues concerning older persons, which constitute ageism despite the need for such attention.

Retirement is an inevitable phenomenon within the society but report concerning retirees indicates their constant agitation for payment of benefits and the benefits is constantly devalued by inflation. In the area of teaching and research the society is not addressing the issues of ageing .According to Baffa (2018) there are 162 universities in Nigeria and from this number none offer courses in social gerontology. It shows apathetic academic attitude towards the issues of ageing in important field of academia. Hence the society lacks appropriate outlet for research, teaching and professional training in ageing that will eventually leads to lack of knowledge and information in addressing issues in relation to increasing number of older persons. Besides international organizations

have shown commitment to the issue of ageing but the effort is not enough. For example, United Nations has Principle for Older Persons through resolution 46/91 of 16th December, 1991; Vienna 1982 and Madrid, 2002 International Plan of Action on Ageing. The African union has similar resolution. But the increasing number of older persons, to be ideally addressed, demands a more focused approach that is beyond resolutions but a practical thorough approach – a full-fledged agency that is exclusively concerned with older persons (Omotayo 2015). The absence of such agency is an evidence of limited attention to older persons as a population group.

Finally, the issue of ageism has opened new frontiers for policy and legislation by some nations of the world. Consequently, in china, it is an offence not to visit and meet financial needs of aged parent (Adewale 2015). While in Nigeria a University Medical Director called for free medical care for older persons (Akinyemi 2018). This shows that care of older persons is a global phenomenon; hence the need for international effort in engaging it. Therefore the next segment of the paper justifies the need for national, regional and global effort on ageing.

4. National, Regional and Global Approach on Ageing

The increasing number of older persons has generated and created complexes and a number of complexes will emerge with corresponding opportunities and challenges. This demands the National, regional and global approach. These are further analysed in this segment

4.1 National Approach

The United Nations (2015), advocated the need for government to ensure that development plans in critical areas such as housing, employment, health care and social protection in general should be designed to adequately accommodate the increasing number of older persons.

In line with this position, the Federal Government of Nigeria in the quest to address challenges that emanate from increasing number

of older persons established National Senior Citizens Centre Acts in 2017 whose primary concern is to ensure wellness of older persons through appropriate provision and inclusion base on their peculiarity in social and economic institutions such as health, education, recreation and employment to mention but few. However, there is the need to have appropriate legislation, policy and enforcement by all critical state actors in ensuring the activation and desired effect of the National Senior Citizens Centre Acts 2017.

4.2 African Union

4.2.1 Rationale for African Union Commission on Ageing

Omotayo (2006), submits that African Union (A U) accommodates the largest number of national governments in Africa. Therefore, is in the best position to advance the issue of ageing. The enormity of global ageing demands the commitment and willingness of member states to mainstream policies on ageing and a number of objectives must be met. The glaring reality of ageing in contemporary time and future projections demands a capacious organ of the Africa Union to handle it. However, the African Union does not have such an organ that wholly concerns itself with ageing.

Consequently, at this juncture it becomes imperative to establish the African Union Commission on Ageing. (A.U.C.A).The commission primary aim is to integrate and initiate all the continent efforts towards achieving successful ageing. There is the need for comprehensive, advance and divergent efforts to be coordinated by the commission especially, in addressing issues of ageing in relation to social, economy and wellness in general.

In the first instance, achieving the objectives of international commitment such as Sustainable Development Goals and addressing the issues of wellness among older persons is highly achievable if generational diversity is taken into consideration. Here, effort should not only be on the working class or on the youth, but also on

older persons. This is because older persons are to play more remarkable role in the society; owing to their increasing participation in societal issues such as sports, education, volunteering and economy. This posits that despite their age older persons are socially and economically relevant in the society.(Omotayo 2014).

Owing to the submission above the African Union as matter of urgency needs to accelerate issues related to ageing. This is because the unprecedented increase in their population is to open new frontier for opportunities in all sphere of life. In view of this, provision of social protection for the ageing population becomes inevitable so that older persons can contribute their quota to societal development. This warrants a paradigm shift in the conceptual view of older persons in the society. It connotes that older person are to be considered as a factor in social, cultural and economic development of the society.

Thus, the challenges are embedded in creating awareness among members state in addressing basic needs that will be important in ensuring successful ageing. Therefore, there is the need for concrete action, such as changes in policies; appropriate services; considering older persons in developmental plans and research into ensuring that emerging challenges are addressed. Finally, the growing number of older persons is bound to generate and create its own complexes that can best be addressed through African Union Commission on Ageing with the sole aim of ensuring wellness of older persons.

4.3 United Nation Gerontological Programme (UNGP).

United Nation remains the epicentre of world logistics on generic issue such as ageing. The organization accommodates the largest number of national governments and it's embodied and influences a number of international organizations.

The enormity of global ageing is evident in the 2002 outcome of Madrid International Plan of Action. There are 19 major political declaration expressing the commitment and willingness of

members state to mainstream policies on ageing. Furthermore, a number of objectives were set which are to be executed by committee for social development. The present reality of ageing demands an elaborate and robust approach that can best be handled by a full fledge organ of the United Nations. However, the United Nations does not have a full fledge organ that solely concerns with older persons as a population group. Though the United Nations through the Department of Economic and Social affairs have done much on ageing such as Opened Working Group on Ageing; 1999 International Year of Older Persons (IYOP;Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing .But with 13% of the world population being older persons and growing at 3% every year. (United Nations-ageing 2018) needs a full fledge Commission on ageing. This will assist member state in having a concerted and coordinated effort in addressing challenges of increasing number of older persons.

Therefore, at this juncture it becomes imperative to establish the United Nation Gerontological Programme (UNGP) whose primary aim is to integrate and initiate all global effort toward achieving successful ageing. There is the need for comprehensive, advance and divergent efforts to be coordinated by UNGP in and among member states. It entails data collections, analysis and interpretation which will be the fulcrum for identification and projection for meeting present and future challenges in relation to social, economic and other necessities owing to increase in the number of older persons.

UNGP will also facilitate and coordinate international research and cooperation on ageing. In addition, UNGP will accelerate the actualization of the four dimensions of 1999 International year of older persons; individual life long development, multigenerational relationship; the international relationship between population ageing and development and the situation of older persons. Furthermore, it will catalyst the priority areas of Madrid Plan of Action; Older persons and development, advancing health and wellbeing into old age and ensuring enabling and supportive environment.

Besides the Sustainable Development Goals relating to health, wellbeing, reduction in income inequality, political, social and economic, integration, and habitation for all population group will be addressed in relation to older persons through United Nation Gerontological Programme (UNGP).

UNGP is to constitute the heart beat for sustaining the world stamina on ageing. An integral constituent for national government, international organization and interest groups in generating the required force and capacity in advancing the wellbeing of older persons. UNGP will equip and prepare United Nation member states for challenges of global ageing. UNGP is to coordinate and facilitate information dissemination and action actualization among UN members state and other related organizations. This is to ensure safety nets of material, financial and logistic safety nets for older persons.

The emerging global ageing is too enormous a responsibility for a single local or international organisation, nation, national government and continental body to handle. It becomes necessary to have UNGP owing to the gargantuan nature of ageing. Seminars, conferences are too infinitesimal to adequately foster the drive to propagate global ageing. UNGP will provide needy members state working machinery through which they can network and get ready assistance on domestic ageing issues.

Furthermore, UNGP will facilitate assistance to needy member state and create an avenue for education and cross fertilization of ideas between and among members' state. This is because the issue of ageing is an emergency second only to insecurity. UNGP is to play a significant role in promoting agenda of older persons and putting in place measures that will enable the current young population to avoid pitfalls of an ageing population. The foregoing reveals various and diverse issues of global ageing. The present scenario calls for an aggressive approach. The growing number of older persons demands a coordinated organ of the United Nation in addressing the challenges posits by ageing.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the submission above global ageing cannot be handled in isolation. It calls for concerted effort, national government, and international organization, regional and inter regional networking and information transfer. This is because global ageing cannot be localized but an international concept owing to international relation, interdependent and dictates of globalization. In the light of this, global ageing can best be handled by UNGP. UNGP is to focus on ageing. UNGP is to assume a generic status that links all other members' state and professional bodies in making ageing issue an integral part of development plan. In addition, UNGP will give a global voice to older persons in making contribution on issue concerning them and psychological comfort of care and relevance.

UNGP should involve the academia. Here, it concerns promoting, and financing research and study in ageing such as retirement and other ancillary. To proffer solution to problems and challenges accruing from global ageing and allowing members states the opportunity to explore and derive the benefit of global ageing.

The paper brought to the essential need for national, continental and global blanket in ensuring wellness of older persons. The study expatiates on global efforts in addressing ageing such as Vienna and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing by the United Nations. The study gives a demographic submission on increasing number of older persons, concept of ageism and increasing participation of older persons in social and economic institutions that warranted the need for more intense effort in addressing issues in relation to older persons. Hence, the paper justifies and presents national, continental and global approach that will blanket the issues of global ageing.

6. Recommendations

- Nations all over the world should enact Older Persons Acts.
- The nations that have the Older Persons Acts should mainstream it immediately.

- There should be conscious effort in addressing ageism in all institutions and strata of the society .
- African Union should set up African Union Commission on Ageing (AUCA)
- United Nations should set up United Nation Gerontological Programme (UNGP).

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