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Original Article

Social Support, Socio Demographic Factors and Elder Abuse: A Quantitative Study In Osun, Nigeria

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Abstract. Elder abuse has continued to be a serious concern to many stakeholders in the world and Nigeria as reported by researchers, as well as various media platforms. It is from this fact that this present study examined the role of social support and socio demographic factors on elder abuse in Ile-Ife Osun state, Nigeria. Theory of social exchange provided the theoretical framework while a descriptive survey was adopted. Three hundred and ninety-two (392) respondents (Males = 192, Females = 200, M = 70.77, S.D. = 6.33) were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising demographics variables, elder abuse and social support scale. Data were analysed using t-test for independence measure and analysis of variance (ANOVA). t-test for independent statistics revealed that social support differentiated elder abuse t(390) = -3.33; p< .001). There were some gender differences in elder abuse (t(390) = 2.20; p = .028). There was no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and elder abuse (F(3, 389) = 1.46; p = .225). The study concluded that social support and gender played a vital role with elder abuse in Osun state. The study, therefore, recommended that government should provide appropriate social support such as prompt payment of pension and gratuity, provision of feeding, good, as well as living arrangements with special attention on elderly men.

Introduction

Over the past five years, concerns about elderly abuse among elderly who are 60 years and above especially in a developing country like Nigeria have received increased research attention among scholars (Akpan & Umobong, 2013; Cadmus, Owoaje, & Akinyemi 2015; Dangbin & Kyamru, 2014; Ekot, 2016; Oluoha et al., 2017). Older people made up around 3% of the total population (Population Reference Bureau, 2012, p.10; Population Reference Bureau, 2017, p.8) of around 170.1 million in 2012 (Population Reference Bureau, 2012, p.6) and around 191 million in 2017 (Population Reference Bureau, 2017, p.1). The economic difficulties in families, unemployment rate, poverty, as well as rapid urbanisation have made it difficult for grown up children to take care of their elderly parents, thereby making the elderly vulnerable to abuse or maltreatment ("National Research Council of the National Academies, Committee on National Statistics and Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral

and Social Sciences and Education, Panel to Review Risk and Prevalence of Elder Abuse and Neglect", 2003).

Many definitions of elderly abuse have been put forward by different scholars. According to the American Psychological Association (2012), elderly abuse refers to some form of physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, or financial harm on an older adult, as well as intentional or unintentional caregiver neglect of an older adult, caused by others because of living situations and family stressors in the case of the elderly dependence on family member for companionship and meeting their basic needs, as well as from cultural issues of lack of respect for older adults in society. Elderly abuse is said to be an infringement on human rights to be safe and free from violence of an aged person which has the capacity of having a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of such people (Dong, Chang, Wong, Wong, & Simon, 2011, p.290). From these definitions, it can be deduced that elder abuse is a singularly or repeated action which occurs within any relationship that is associated with affectionate, which resulted into distressing situation for the elderly person.

Elderly abuse can occur in five forms which are physical, psychological/emotional, financial, sexual abuse and neglect (American Psychological Association, 2012, pp.3-5; World Health Organisation, 2002, p.3), structural and societal abuse, disrespect and ageist attitudes, legal abuse(World Health Organisation, 2002, p.8). In Nigeria, elderly people have been abused especially in terms neglect, financial abuse, emotional abuse (Akpan & Umobong, 2013; Asogwa & Igbokwe, 2010; Ola & Olalekan, 2012; Sijuwade, 2008). In Osun state where the present study was conducted, the menace of elder abuse as a result of poor dietary intake as neglected by family member has also been reported by study done by Alao, Akinola, and Ojofeitimie (2015). This menace occurs in the form of neglect, maltreatment and financial abuse, as well as wrongly castigated of elderly as witches and wizards. This problem has contributed to elder abuse developing various kinds of psychosocial problems in the form of insomnia, depression, loneliness, anxiety and in some cases suicidal attempt by these elders (United Nation, 2015). The lack of well-meaningful policies on the welfare of elderly people as well as the lack of social security accounts for more deplorable conditions of older persons population in Osun state and Nigeria as a whole. Studies conducted by Animasahun and Chapman (2017), Bigala and Ayiga (2014), Oluoha et al., (2017) have investigated variables such as loneliness, self-efficacy, neglect etc as antecedents of elderly abuse but the role of social support and socio demographic factors have received little (e.g Fapohunda, 2014; Omorogiuwa 2016) or no research attention in the literature.

Social support refers to the extent to which individual basic needs are met through a viable relationship with people (Terrence, Amick & Judith, 2004). Social support can come in different forms and it occurs in different contexts and ways. The source can come in the form of tangible or intangible support while the source can be from family, friends, and significant others (Greenberger, Chen, Tally, & Dong, 2000). Lack of social support from any of these sources has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many psychological wellbeing problems including abuse (Uchino, 2006). Gender and socio-economic status were also considered very vital to elderly abuse in this present study. Gender can be said to be a social attributes or roles that make up a man or woman (World Health Organisation, 2015). Research conducted on gender and elder abuse remains inconsistent in the literature, for instance Ekot (2012) asserted that women experienced more abuse than their men counterpart while Bigala and Ayiga (2014) found that male experienced more abuse than their female counterpart. Socio-economic status in the present study is elder societal worth in terms of income generated. The level of income of an elderly person could go a long way to determine if an elder will be abused or not.

Drawing up from the social exchange theory, (Homans 1950) it argues that when there is no enough social support to cater for the elder people, there could be very high elderly abuse because as the elder gets no support from people so will he or she be subjected to abuse. This study makes specific contributions to elderly abuse literature. Firstly, by expanding the range

of variables such as social support and socio demographic factors (gender and socio economic status). Secondly, this study provides more support for social exchange theory by incorporating social support as important resource that can explain elderly abuse. Finally, while evidence of elderly abuse has been established among older persons in Nigeria (Cadmus, Owoaje & Akinyemi 2014; Dangbin & Kyamru, 2014), there has been no study that has investigated the joint role of social support and socio demographic factors on elderly abuse in a civil service state like Osun state despite frantic search from American Psychological association (APA) websites and web ordering system databases (WoS). It is from this foregoing that the present study examines the impact of the two variables on elderly abuse. Outcome of this study may provide more insight on how elderly abuse can be reduced or eradicated in Nigeria and other countries of the world.

Review of Related Studies

Social Support and Elder Abuse

Lack of social support has been reported in the literature (Melchiorre et al., 2013; Omorogiuwa 2016; Richards 2013) to have negative impact on elderly abuse. A study conducted by Vilar-Compte, Giraldo-Rodríguez, Ochoa-Laginas and Gaitan-Rossi (2017) investigated the relationship among depression and elder abuse, and the role of social support among 526 elder women. This study found that social support influenced the association between depression and elder abuse. In another similar study conducted by Dong and Simon (2008) examined the connection between social support and elder mistreatment among aged people. It was found in the study that high social support was linked with reduced risk for elder mistreatment. Melchiorre et al., (2013) examined the role of social support on abuse among 4,467 older persons in seven European countries. The study found that older persons who received low social support were related to psychological abuse. A Nigeria study conducted by Omorogiuwa (2016) looked at the impact of social support on elder mistreatment among male and female elderly in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. The study found that elderly person who got more social support revealed low level of elder mistreatment than a victim who received low social support. Richards (2013) investigated the influenced of social support on abuse among the elderly. The study found that social support influence elder abuse.

Socio demographic factors (gender and income) and Elder Abuse

Elder abuse can be viewed in different ways depending on one's gender. Gender refers to individual status either as a male or female. It defines out those social, cultural, and physiological roles that are specific to males and females in a social context (Fapohunda, 2014; Odedokun, 2015; Ogungbamila & Fajemirokun, 2016). Ekot (2016) found in his study a significant link among gender and all typology of abuse, i.e. physical, psychological/emotional, financial, sexual abuse and neglect of the elderly. Livermore, Bunt and Biscan (2001) found that elder abuse was more prominent with female than male. In another quantitative study conducted by Biggs, Manthorpe, Tinker, Doyle, and Erens (2009) they revealed that women experienced significantly higher abuse than their husbands. Acierno (2010) in another related study on gender difference revealed that women were twice as victims of abuse than men. Past studies such as (Akpan & Umobong, 2013; Asogwa & Igbokwe, 2010; Ola & Olalekan, 2012) all found a consistent result that elderly women experienced more often all forms of abuse than aged men. In the study of Akpan and Umobong (2013) they found that low education and being female were not related to abuse among elderly. In the same study, Akpan and Umobong (2013) also found that respondents who have low income reported all forms of abuse. This finding agrees with that of Biggs, Manthorpe, Tinker, Doyle, and Erens (2009) who found that income level had negative correlation with abuse. Dong, Simon, and Gorbien

(2007) found that older persons who reported low income had abuse compare to elderly who reported higher income with no abuse.

Hypotheses

Starting from the findings mentioned in the previous studies, our research formulated the following hypotheses
1. There would be some significant social support differences in elderly abuse
2. There would be some significant gender differences in elderly abuse
3. There would be significant differences between socioeconomic status and elderly abuse.

Method

Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The design is appropriate because the study sought to obtain information on a certain issue from representative from Nigeria through the use of a structured questionnaire without manipulating any of the variables. The independent variables in the study were social support and socio demographic factors (gender and socioeconomic status) while the dependent variable was elderly abuse.

Participants

A total number of three hundred and ninety-two retirees (192 males; 200 females) participated in the study. This sample was selected from ten communities in Ile-Ife, Osun state using purposive sampling technique. Age varied between 60 and 80 years (Mean = 70.77 years, SD =6.33). With regards to the marital status of the participants, 27(6.9%) were widow/widower, 346 (88.3%) were married, 11 (2.8%) of respondents were divorced and eight (2%) were separated. Respondent's religion affiliation revealed that 269 (68.6%) were Christians, 111(28.3%) were Muslim while 12(3.1%) were African traditional religion. Their monthly annual income showed that 35(8.9%) were at low income level, 267(68.1%) were at middle income level while 90(23%) were at high income level. Finally, respondent's educational level showed that 83(21.2%) were primary school holders, 111(28.3%) were secondary school holders and the majority of the respondents 198(50.5%) had tertiary educational levels.

Measures

A single paper and pencil instrument served for data collection in the study. The instrument was made up of standardised psychological scales.

Elder Abuse

Elder abuse was measured using the 15 item Hwalek-Sergstock Elder Abuse Screening Test (HSEAST) scale developed by Neale, Hwalek, Scott, Sengstock and Stahl (1991). The items were modified in order to suit the respondents in the study. A sample of the items reads "Do you have anyone who spends time with you"? and" Do you do household chores by yourself always"? The items carried the 'no' or 'yes' forced choice response format. The 'No' responses were rated zero (0) while the 'yes' response was rated one (1). Item responses were

added together across all the items to obtain a global elder abuse score. The higher the total score, the more likelihood the respondent is experiencing elder abuse. According to the authors of the scale it demonstrated a good test-retest reliability of .82 and Cronbach's alpha of .63. In the present study its validity and reliability among the study population was assessed through a pilot study. A test-retest method with three weeks interval was conducted for the scale. It was conducted by administering the scales to 40 (20 male and 20 female) retirees among the study population. The results of the internal consistency in this present study were .65 and also a test-retest reliability of .86.

Social Support

12 item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) was used to measured social support in the present study. A sample of the items includes "There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings" and '' My family really tries to help me'' The items on the scale were scored on a 6-point Likert-format from 1 -Very Strongly Disagree to 6 -Very Strongly Agree. The scale consists of four items which score could range from 4 to 28. High score on the scale means high perceived social support while low score on the scale means low perceived social support. This scoring pattern was adopted for this study. The reliability of the whole scale as reported by its author was .91. A Cronbach's alpha of .93 was obtained in the present study.

Procedure

An approval letter was gotten from the chairmen of retirees association in each locality before conducting the study. The researcher afterwards sought participant consent from each of the venue by making respondents fill the informed consent form that was attached to the questionnaire. The researcher also assured the participant on confidentiality and discretion of the study. The participants were also informed of the purposes and/or objectives of the study. In addition, the respondents were told by the researcher that there were no right or wrong answers, and as such they should try to be as honest as possible in their responses. The respondents were told that they had the ethical right to discontinue from the study at any time in the study. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents by the researcher with the help of the chairman as well as the vice-chairman on the close of their meeting. Majority of the respondents filled their questionnaire on the spot while many committee members returned their questionnaires after the meeting that same day. The researcher faced a hectic task before locating some of the venue of their meetings. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents and a total number of 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed but only 392 questionnaires were retrieved as 8 questionnaires were not returned by the respondents. This yielded a response rate of 98%.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistic such as mean, standard deviation and percentages were used to analyse the socio demographic factors of the respondents while inferential statistic was used to test the hypotheses. Hypothesis one was tested using t-test for independent measure, this is because social support was categorised into two independent group of low and high, while t-test for independent measure was used to test the second hypothesis because gender was also naturally categorised as male and female. Hypothesis three was tested with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), this is because socioeconomic status was measured in three levels of

low, moderate and high. All this analysis was carried out with the IBM/SPSS programme software version 22.0 all at .05 level of significance.

Result

Hypothesis One

There would be some significant social support differences in elderly abuse. The hypothesis was tested among a sample of three hundred and ninety-two (392) elderly people using the t-test for independent measure at .05% level of significance. The analysis involved categorising respondent's scores on social support into high and low. Then low scores were compared with high scores on elderly abuse, the summary of the analysis is showed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of independent sample t-test showing differences in social support on elderly abuse

	Social support	N	M	SD	df	t	p
	Low	330	28.00	4.25			
Elderly abuse					390	-3.33	<.001
	High	62	26.44	3.16			

Table 1 shows that elderly abuse was differentiated by social support (t= -3.33; df= 390; p<.001).The result implies that the respondents who received low social support (*M*= 28.00; *SD*= 4.25) reported significantly higher elderly abuse than the respondents who received high social support (*M*= 26.44; *SD*= 3.16). Therefore, the result in Table 1 provides support for hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis Two

There would be some significant gender differences in elderly abuse. The hypothesis was tested among a sample of three hundred and ninety-two (392) using the t-test for independent measure at .05% level of significance. The analysis involved categorising respondent's scores gender into male and female. Then male scores were compared with female score on elderly abuse, and the summary of the analysis is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that there were some gender differences in the experienced of elderly abuse (t= 2.20; df= 390; p<.028).The result implies that male elderly (*M* = 27.07; SD= 3.23) significantly reported higher elderly abuse than their female counterpart (*M* = 26.32; SD= 3.52). Therefore, the result in Table 2 provides support for hypothesis 2.

Table 2. Summary of independent sample t-test showing gender differences in elderly abuse

	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
	Male	192	27.07	3.23			
Elderly abuse					390	2.20	<.028
	Female	200	26.32	3.52			

Hypothesis Three

There would be significant differences in socioeconomic status on elderly abuse. The hypothesis was tested with analysis of variance (ANOVA) at .05% level of significance. The level of socioeconomic status were categorised into low, middle and upper on elderly abuse score. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3

Table 3. Summary of one-way ANOVA showing socioeconomic status and elderly abuse

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Between Groups	1067.804	3	15.703	1.46	
Within Groups	3463.461	389	10.723		>.225
Total	4531.265	392			

The Table 3 shows that the experienced elderly abuse was not differentiated by the socioeconomic status of the victim $F(3, 389) = 1.46$; p = >.225). Therefore, the result in Table 3 did not provide support for hypothesis 3.

Discussion

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, there were social support differences in elderly abuse. This suggests that that elderly who have low social support have higher elderly abuse than elderly who have high social support. The study finding was in line with Dong and Simon (2008) who discovered that high social support was linked with low Elder mistreatment. The study finding was in agreement with Melchiorre et al., (2013) who found that low social support predict older age psychological abuse. The study was also in line with Omorogiuwa (2016) who found that elderly who have high social support revealed lower elder mistreatment than victim who receives low social support. The justification for this finding could be unconnected with the fact that elderly stage is a period where social support is needed from friends, family and significant others for the rest of elderly person life. Also, another possible explanation for the finding was offered by social support theory which proposed that when there is no enough social support to cater for the elder people, there could be very high elderly abuse because as the elder get no support from people he or she could be vulnerable to different form of abuse.

As predicted in Hypothesis 2, there were some gender differences in the experienced of elderly abuse. The study finding was not consistent with studies such as (Akpan & Umobong, 2013; Asogwa & Igbokwe, 2010; Ekot 2016; Ola & Olalekan 2012) who all found in their study that elderly female are more abused than elderly male. The study was also not similar with Biggs, Manthorpe, Tinker, Doyle, and Erens (2009) who revealed that women significantly experienced mistreatment than men. The justification for this finding could be unconnected with the fact that traditionally in Nigeria; men are known to be the breadwinner of the family despite at old age. This perception is often hold by family members, friends which resulted in many of the elderly men still been abused at that stage of their life.

Hypothesis 3 also revealed that the experienced elderly abuse was not differentiated by the socioeconomic status. The study finding was not in accordance with Ekot (2016) who found that elderly income level had association with all forms of abuse in Akwa Ibom State. The study finding was also not in line with Biggs et al. (2009) who revealed that

socioeconomic position was highly linked mistreatment. Also not in agreement with Dong, et.al (2007) who found that low income was positively related with elder abuse. However, Acierno (2010) asserted that low income elderly reported high sexual mistreatment and neglect. The rationale why this finding was so maybe unconnected with that fact that elderly mostly in Nigeria have the belief that their income level or socioeconomic status would not alone bring joy or happiness to them at that period of their life.

Recommendations

In order to reduce abuse among elderly in Osun state, it is recommended that government should provide appropriate social support such as prompt payment of pension and gratuity, accessible health care facilities, provision of physical needs such as feeding, finance, good living arrangements among others. This social support could reduce elderly abuse. The study also recommends that psychologists should develop intervention programmes such as psycho-education with special attention on elderly men. Theoretically, this study also builds and supports the social exchange theory by incorporating social support as an important characteristic that can explain elderly abuse.

Limitation and Suggestion for future studies

One vital limitation that this present study has is the issue of generalisation of study finding. This is because the study sample was relatively small and only carried out in Osun state which is one state out of the thirty-six state in Nigeria. It is therefore of caution to generalise the result of this finding to the entire elderly population in Nigeria and globally. Also, getting the participants of the present study to fill the questionnaires was another limitation of the study. Therefore to enhance the strength of this study, Future studies can improve the setting and sample of the study by inculcating some form of incentives. Future studies can also investigate more psychosocial factors such as resilience and personality traits on elderly abuse. Qualitative approach such as interview, focus group discussion etc could also be utilised by future research in order to have a more robust findings.

Conclusion

We have been able to contribute to knowledge by examining the role of social support and socio demographic factors on elder abuse especially among elderly in Nigeria where evidence of high elder abuse has been established (Ekot, 2016; Oluoha etal., 2017). The study concluded that social support and gender play an important role on the experience of elder abuse in Osun state, Nigeria.

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