

# **AN APPRAISAL OF CONTEMPORARY INCREASE OF OLDER PERSONS' PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETAL ISSUES AND RETIREMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

**OMOTAYO, O TOPE**

Department of Adult Education  
Tai Solarin University of Education  
Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria

**AJAYI, Olatunde O. Ph.D.**

Department of Sociological Studies,  
College of Social & Management Sciences,  
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

**And**

**Sofadekan, Adedayo. O. Ph. D.**

Department of Sociological Studies,  
College of Social & Management Sciences,  
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

## **Abstract**

Nigeria, as a nation, has passed through a lot of political, social and economic milestones since independence in 1960. A number of these events are majorly political, such as change of government that is usually violent and which led to fatality whenever it involved violent change of power by the Nigerian military. Furthermore, elections have been found to be violent owing to irregularities and attempt to rig or prevent rigging in an election. Also, the concept of economic instability has also been a major issue for the Nigerian state since independence.

Despite, these major issues, there are insidious occurrences that do not relate in whole, to economic or social issues but population group such as adolescent, women and older persons. This paper adopts qualitative research method while content analysis was used to analyse issues relating to increase in older persons and retirement within the Nigerian state, since the nation's independence in 1960.

The study concludes that increasing number of older persons and the concept of retirement are unprecedented occurrences in Nigeria since independence. Thus, it demands urgent legislation, policy and practices in addressing challenges emanating from the increase in number of older persons and retirees. A number of recommendations such as the need for increasing attention to

older persons 'and retirees' issues through legislation and affirmative action such as payment of social pension to all older persons and prompt payment of gratuity and pension to retirees are suggested in the paper.

## **Introduction**

Historically, from the position of Omotayo and Adegbola (2014), Nigeria as a country, has passed through a lot of political upheavals which have caused serious inconsistency in government. These occurrences have major effect on the development of Nigeria as a nation since her independence on 1 October, 1960 and a Republic in 1963. Politically, Nigeria as a country, has a tumultuous political history with fifteen Heads of State and Presidents; seven of them were removed from office by coup de-tat (Balewa, Ironsi, Gowon, Muritala, Shagari, Buhari and Shonekan); three were assassinated (Balewa, Ironsi and Muritala); two died in office (Abacha and Yar'dua); only two have been democratically voted out of office (Obasanjo and Jonathan while only two handed over power (Obasanjo and Abdusalami). Apart from these political issues, the economy of Nigeria and the concept of development in general have been major issues of concern.

Economically, Nigeria as a nation has passed through economic imbroglio and the government over the years has used a number of measures to address the economic challenges. Among these include 'low profile' by Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979); 'austerity measure' by Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983) and 'Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)' by Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (1985-2003). This led to an economic riot in June, 1989 tagged Anti-SAP riot. Presently, the economy has been in recession as evident in a number of factors such as high inflation. Apart from these major economic, social and political turn in Nigeria after fifty-nine years of independence; there are other contemporary issues that are generating unprecedented reactions within the Nigerian state. One of such is increasing participation of older persons in societal issues and retirement.

The position and thrust of this paper is that the issue of ageing in general and retirement in Nigeria are inter-related, bifocal and fundamental unicorn experience in Nigeria since independence. This is because increasing participation of older persons in societal issues has become a challenge to the Nigerian state. Owing to the fact that Nigeria as a country lacks the necessary legislation, policy and practices to accommodate the increasing number of older persons such as the challenge with payment of retirement benefits; owing to increasing number of retirees in particular which is one of the consequences of increasing number of older persons as most retirees belong to the population group of older persons (Sixty years above).

In summation, this paper presents increasing participations of older persons in societal issues and the concept of retirement in Nigeria a fundamental phenomenon in Nigeria since independence.

## Global Ageing

The United Nations (2015), gives a demographic report on the increasing number of older persons. From the report, it was gathered that 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 outnumbered 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 submitted statistics is to affect every country of the world and it can be argued that developing countries such as Nigeria is inclusive. 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. From the submission, the major cause of increase in older persons is as a result of declined infertility and increase in longevity. 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 that show that the world population is ageing and is to age fast.

## Ageing: an Overview

A normal individual life by natural and societal designs divided into three parts. The first is the time of birth; being nurtured by parents. The second period is when an individual becomes matured, independent and earn a living. The final stage is when an individual becomes frail owing to age and lacks the agility for optimal human activity required for professional and day-to-day living. Hence, he/she withdraws from main frame of social activity. The submission can be described as the tripod of life; the three natural / societal design period of an individual life. It begins from the time of birth to the time an individual start to work (Nurturing). The second is the time when an individual earns a living in public, private sector and raises a family (World of Work). The last is recess when an individual, owing to age, stopped working. (retirement). The last stage of the tripod of life is ageing and it concerns older persons (from sixty years) as a population group. Ageing from the position of Bulugbe (2013), involves a gradual decline or wearing off of somatic cells in the human body. This is because the human body is made up of cells that in turn, form tissues, organs and bones. These cells are constantly being created, developing and dying, while new cells are generated to replace them and that in older persons, the cells regeneration rate appears to decrease and a slowing down of biological functions and reduction in reserve follows. Such leads to decline in older persons' energy for day- to- day activities leading to performance reduction and, thus, must retire. Furthermore, from forage into literature, the increasing

number of older persons and its ancillary did suggest increasing participation of the population group in societal issues. The next segment of the paper analyses the assertion and justifies the increasing participation of older persons and retirement in societal issues as a fundamental phenomenon in Nigeria since 1960.

### **Older persons' participation in social issues;**

This segment of the paper asserts the increasing participation of older persons' in societal issues and contemporary retirement issues as fundamental occurrence in Nigeria's 60 years of independence. 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.

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. Such occurrences point to the fact that sex is also important to older persons that sex is not to be enjoyed by only younger generation. Furthermore, the issue of divorce, as reported above, has become inter-generational as it cuts across all generations since older persons are also involved. From the submission of Akasike (2017), an older person in Bayelsea State at the age of 87 years got married because of loneliness. The wife died in 1991 and all the children have married. This shows that older persons just as younger generation deserve and desire marriage and sex that were once presumed to be the exclusive domain of the younger generation. From the above submission, it could be argued that older persons are also involved in romance, love and divorce. Adeyi (2015), reported that an 80- year old man was arrested in Lagos state for arms possession. While Oloker (2015), asserted that fifteen thousand ghost pensioners were discovered by the Federal Government of Nigeria, an old man at 87 was remanded in prison for defiling a thirteen years old girl (Omojuyigbe 2017). From the submission above, the concept of crime is no longer restricted to the younger generation only, but older persons are getting more involved in crime from rape and organized 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), further 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 is the oldest Olympics torch

bearer (Adewale 2015). The submission above depicts the fact that older persons in contemporary times are active participants in sports activity.

Besides, the issue of ageing and harsh treatment of older persons has opened new frontiers for policy and legislation by some nations of the world. Consequently, from a report in China, it is illegal not to visit and meet financial needs of aged parents (Adewale 2015). Educationally, 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 getting more involved in education, even as students. Owing to the purported increase in the number of older persons, the United Nations (2002) has advocated the inclusion of ageing in higher institutions curriculum. This shows the increasing number of older persons as a generic phenomenon that provokes world attention.

In conclusion, the segment brought to the fore the increasing participation of older persons in societal issues that was once presumed the exclusive domain of young people. These include crime, love, romance, divorce, education and sports.

## **Retirement**

One of the consequences of increasing number of older persons is increase in the number of retirees that has made the concept of retirement a fundamental issue in Nigeria.

In furtherance of this argument, Adeoye and Alagbe (2016), reported that workers are against the Federal Government for investing their pension funds on infrastructure. The report shows the economic importance of retirement as the retirement fund is huge to the extent of being used for infrastructural development. Presently, the pension funds from the position of Tolu- Kusimo (2017), hits 7.097 trillion naira as at March 2017. It was 6.255 trillion naira in 2016. The number of registered workers is 7.4 million as at March 2017. This represents 7.45% of labour and 3.95 % of the entire population .6.7 billion is paid every month as pension and 30 billion naira is collected monthly. For investment; 53.46% is in government bonds while 18.59 % is invested in treasury bills. While two hundred thousand employees in the private sector has joined; 184, 979 retired under the scheme in 2017 and the pension scheme is 6 % of GDP. The submission above has presented retirement as economically-momentous in Nigeria after 59 years of independence.

However, the plight of pension is ubiquitous in Nigeria from the position of Attah (2016), two pensioners died in Benue State during protest over 11 months' unpaid arrears. Furthermore, in Bayelsa State, it was reported that three pensioners collapsed during verification exercise. The pensioners complained that the exercise was cumbersome as their age is not considered (Falaranmi 2016). In Edo State, pensioners also protest unpaid arrears that range from 7-42 months, (Okere 2016) and in Delta State, pensioners protested owing to unpaid retirement benefits (The

Punch 2017). Besides Okere (2016), reported constant changes in retirement policy and practices in Nigeria. From available information, the Federal Government used to remit money to state quarterly to pay retirees. This was changed and the head of service of the federation was later saddled with the responsibility. In addition, there are a number of committees handling the issues of pension. There is the Pension Reform Task Team and Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD) before it was suspended by the finance minister in March 2016. Such policy inconsistency is a menace to pension programme in Nigeria and occurrence such as this, has made retirement insalubrious to retirees which is unprecedented in Nigeria since 1960.

In addition, 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 Occurrence like this attests to the fact that owing to retirement challenges such as delay in payment of pension; retirees are no longer passive about issues that concern them. The position of this paper is that in an unprecedented manner, retiree's despite being older persons, still involve in pressure groups like labour unions within the society to ensure that their rights are adequately protected. The submission above indicates the plight and precarious state of Nigerian pensioners. It is an exceptional challenge to pensioners' welfare in Nigeria since 1960 which is extraordinary. Thus, it can be argued that for the first time, the Nigerian state has failed to care for retirees.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that older persons as a population group in Nigeria, has unprecedentedly involved in social, economic and other activities such as education, sports, crime, romance, divorce and unionism.

The conclusion is that the increasing participation of older persons in social and economic issues and retirement has provoked and opened new frontiers for policy formulation and informed decision that allows the society to readily address challenges that emanate from increasing number of older persons and the consequence of retirement. 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 submission has entrenched the increasing number of older persons and retirement as a distinct phenomenon in Nigeria since independence. This is because the increase in the number of older persons and retirees has not only affected social and economic issues in general, but has instigated major policy formulation and reformation in Nigeria since independence. This premier and significant policy formation and reformation is the introduction of contributory pension scheme,

Pension Act in 2004 and a reform ten years after in 2014. This reform is unprecedented in Nigeria and has its advantages in economic activities such as employment creation, finance provision for development and viability of retirees as a population group in general which cannot be ignored owing to their increasing participation and effect on social and economic activities that is and will continue to influence social and economic direction in years to come.

## Reference

- Adeoye, G & Alagbe, J (2016, October 1). Labour , Workers Kick as FG Eyes Pension Fund. *Saturday Punch*, pp.10.
- Adesomoju A (2016) 80- year Old Buhari's Daughter , 2, 216 Others Join Nigerian Bar . *The Punch*, July, 15;10.
- Adewale A (2015), 'Mieko Nagaoka at 100 years old completed 1,500 meters of Swimming Competition in Japan' *Tell*, May, 11;10
- Adewale A (2015), 'Harry Nelson 90 years old 18 times at Olympic' *Tell*, November,23 ;11
- Adewale A (2015) 'Oldest touchbeareer' *Tell*, November, 23 ;11
- Adeyi Y ( 2015) 'Police Arraign 80 – Year old , Others for Possession of Arms *Saturday Punch* May, 4 ;5
- Atoyebi, O (2016, October 12). N 22bn Arrears : Oyo Released N080 M to Pay Pensioners *The Punch*, pp12 .
- Akasike C (2017) .I can't Continue to stay alone 87- years old Lawyer ;*The Punch* 18/10/ 2017 pp4
- Attah, E (2016, August 4). Two Retirees Slump during Pension Arrears Protest in Benue. *The Punch*, pp16.
- Bulugbe, T & Adewale (2013). *Physical Exercise: An Elixir for Healthy and Active Aging*. 3rd. Inaugural Lecture Tai-Solarin University Education. Ijagun, Ijebu –Ode.
- Falaranmi, F (2016). '3 Pensioners Collapse in Bayelsa ' *Dailsun* . June , 8 pp 5
- Okere A (2016) 'Pensioners Protest Unpaid Arrears in Edo ' *The Punch* .August ,9 :5
- Oloror, F. (2015) 'F.G Orders Verification of Workers ' *The Punch*, May, 8; 7
- Omojuyigbe O (2017). Man, 82, remanded for defiling teenagers. *The Punch* 18/102017 pp 4
- Omotayo O.T & Adegbola G.M (2014). 'Political Degradation of Older Persons: An Analysis of 2003 General Election in South West Nigeria. *Ijagun Journal of History and Diplomacy*. Vol.2. 75-90.
- Omotayo O.T (2014). 'The Economic Viability of Increasing Number of Older Persons'. *Journal of Inquiries in Sociological Studies*. 1(1)154-161.

- Omotayo O. T (2016). 'Dynamics of Sports Retirement and Volunteering' *Journal of African Sports Management Associations* 11 83-94. The Department of Recreation and Exercise Science Kenyatta University, Nairobi Kenya
- The Punch (2017) .September, 28:1.
- Tolu – Kusimo O (2017), 'Pension Fund hits n7.094tr' The Nation .18/10/2017 pp35
- United Nations (2003). *Second World Assembly on Ageing 2002.*\_\_New York United Nations.
- United Nations (2015). 'Key Trends in Population Ageing for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' World Population Ageing 2015. Highlights .New York; United Nation.
- Vanguard Newapper (2015). 'Italian Wife Applied for Divorce' October 17, 30