

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOW ACTIVITY OF DAILY LIFE
AND LONELINESS OF GERIATRICS IN IKOT- EKPENE METROPOLIS,
AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot- Ekpene metropolis, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. The study employed correlational design. A total of three hundred (300) old people comprising 104 males and 199 females, whose age ranged between 60 years and 81 years were used in the study. A self-administered and close-ended questionnaire containing gender and age, Geriatric Loneliness Scale ($\alpha = .75$) and Activity of Daily Life Scale ($\alpha = .71$) were used in collecting data from the participants. Data collected was analysed using simple percentage and Pearson product moment correlation. The result revealed that low activity of daily life significantly correlated with loneliness of geriatrics; and that the level of loneliness increased as chronological age increased. Based on the result, it was concluded that low activity of daily life significantly correlated with loneliness of geriatric in Ikot- Ekpene metropolis, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria.

Keyword: Relationships, low activity of daily life, loneliness of geriatrics, Ikot-ekpene metropolis

Introduction

It is the desire of most individuals to live long and enjoy life. However, transition from one stage of life to another is always associated with varying level of psycho-social and economic challenges that an individual must cope with or confront. Flesch, (1986) noted that the genesis of old age is sixty-five which last when the person died. However, since there is no universally accepted age of being old, age of 60 (civil service retirement age) could be taken as old age.

It is one of the strongest assertions that loneliness is synonymous to old age; and thus becomes a stereotypic picture of people within this age group (Tornstan, 1994). It is believed that old people are particularly susceptible to issues such as loneliness, which often results into adverse health challenges for these people. Old people are believed to often being socially isolated for several reasons. For example, deaths of spouse and friend, retirement, old age illnesses and disability, etc.

are some of the reasons that have been adduced for loneliness among the old people, especially as they begin to move from 70 years and onward.

Several definitions of loneliness have been given by scholars, while others have been able to identify common elements in the definitions. For instance, three major elements have been found as common to various definitions (Paplau and Perlman, 1992). These scholars identified loneliness to be a negative and unpleasant subjective feeling, resulting from reduction in social relation. This means that loneliness is a function of subjective or personal perception of the reporter; thus, different people may not experience same level of loneliness when presented with same situation. In addition, loneliness usually leads to negative mental and physical challenges.

Loneliness is conceptualised as unpleasant adverse feeling that an individual experience and/or reported following a real or perceived insufficient quality social relationship. This also signifies that loneliness could be experience even when the available social relations are not exhibiting quality affection and support to the person concerned. More so, it needs be emphasised that loneliness and isolation are two different concepts in that while loneliness is subjective, isolation is objective. Broadly, loneliness could be due to external factors (e.g. poor social relation) and internal factors (e.g. personality traits, etc.).

Andersson (1990) asserts that loneliness can have both developmental and situational origins. The developmental aspect considers loneliness as a situation that arises because an individual is transiting to old age which is bedeviled with some psycho-physiological impediments. In contrast, situational aspect emphasise the fact that loneliness is due to the surrounding or environmental situation that an elderly found himself or herself. The latter opinion upholds that loneliness is not an automatic incidence that must follow old age, since not only old people suffer loneliness and not all old people have such issue. Basically, loneliness in old age could be described as combination of developmental and situational origins. Tornstam et al., (1998) discovered that in explaining loneliness, due attention should be given to both external and internal factors.

Igbokwe, Ejeh, Agbaje, *et al* (2020), Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019) have pointed out that loneliness is a common phenomenon for old people in Nigeria. It was submitted that this had led to several negative health outcomes like poor QoL, depressive symptoms, cognitive distortions (e.g. dementia), and physical disability. Igbokwe, Ejeh, Agbaje, *et al* (2020), *further noted that* often in emerging economies like Nigeria, incidences of chronic diseases that are related to retirement, poor financial capacity, inadequate retirement benefits and compensations, loss of companionship, etc. are common phenomenon. Thus, it is suggested that most old adults in Nigeria could be suffering loneliness more than their age mates in developed nations where living conditions and standard are better.

Epidemiology data shows that the level of loneliness among the elderlies could be higher compared with data from developed countries. For instance, among Western population, a prevalence of 13.1% was found (Domènech-Abella, *et al.*, 2017), which is in contrast with the prevalence of 16.7% reported for loneliness in Ibadan, Nigeria (Ojagbemi and Gureje, 2019); as well as 21.8 among participants in North central Nigeria (Igbokwe, Ejeh, Agbaje, 2020). There seem to be dichotomy in the level of loneliness in different parts of the country. In addition, it could be said that the level of loneliness is getting more year after year. This remains an assertion though, this study will examine it because of the harsh socio-economic conditions that the elderlies are being subjected to in Nigeria.

Although, several studies have demonstrated a correlation between increased loneliness and a variety of predictor variables, e.g. low vision, low income, loss of a spouse (Holmen, Andersson, Ericsson, Ryselberg, & Winbland, 1994; Thorsen, 1990; Chen, 1994), the low level of daily life activity seem to be a prominent determinant of feeling of loneliness of geriatrics. Activity of daily life (ADL) as determinant of loneliness is majorly premised on situation approach of explanatory model of geriatric loneliness.

Activity of Daily Life (ADL) can be defined as the frequency and easiness of engaging in basic activities that an individual needed to function optimally and successfully without the dominant assistance of another person. These activities could be in term of domestic roles, social roles and functioning, career and work-related roles, etc. Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019) observed that reduction in daily activities by the post-retirement age individuals is conspicuous. Accordingly, many of them do take to religious activities, in order to substitute for the “vacuum”. However, this often ameliorates, but not deters the experience of loneliness of this category of people.

It is important to reiterate that the elderlies do not enjoy the luxury of engaging in a lot of social and career related activities they were used to. Many of them are already retired from active service, while so could be having different kinds of physiological challenges which could make engaging in both locomotive and non-locomotive activities a bit difficult. Similarly, several of these elderlies do not have opportunity to visit their friends, while many others are confined into their houses with little opportunity to go out of the compound. With many facing financial problems, chiefly due to lack of adequate pension system and social insurance for the elderlies, majority of them could not afford getting themselves aids or personnel or services that could mitigate the level of loneliness among the geriatrics.

Holmen, et al, (1994) discovered that a significant relationship could exist between loneliness and low activity of daily life (ADL). However, a contrary conclusion drawn from the study conducted by Bondevik (1997) has made researchers to keep finding the nexus between these two variables. Specifically, Bondevik (1997) discovered that an increase in ADL led to corresponding increase in loneliness. This means that further researches need to be conducted in order to empirically corroborate the perceived connection between low activity of daily life and loneliness of the elderlies.

Moreover, Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019) discovered that poor social relationship is common among Nigerian elders and this often leads to feeling of being isolated and lonely. The scholars asserted that most of the elderlies do not have their children around them; hence these elderlies are more indoor which is a mark of low social daily life activity. In addition, most of the elderlies are already retired from active service, which makes them not to have opportunity for high level of physical and social daily life activities. All of these often culminated into loneliness which Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019) have discovered to be a major determinant of all manner of mental health challenges (such as, depression, dementia, etc.) of the old people.

Therefore, the study investigated the level of experience of loneliness among the old people in Ikot-Ekpene metropolis. The study also examined the relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpenemetropolis, AkwaIbom State, Nigeria.

Objectives

- i. Determine if the prevalence level of loneliness among the old people in Ikot- Ekpene metropolis is higher than that of developed countries.
- ii. Examine the relationship between the relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics

Research Questions

- i. Is the prevalence level of loneliness among the old people in Ikot- Ekpene metropolis higher than those of the developed countries?
- ii. relationship between the relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpene metropolis, AkwaIbom State, Nigeria?

Method

This study adopted correlational design. The study was aimed at collecting data from the participants without any form of manipulation; and discovered the relationship between activity of daily life and loneliness. A total of three hundred and three (303) old people comprising 104 males and 199 females, whose age ranged between 60 years and 81 years were used in the study. Participants were randomly selected from various quarters in Ikot-Ekpenemetropolis in AkwaIbom State. There is lack of official figure on the exact number of elderly people in this area. For this study, instrument for data collection was a questionnaire comprising three sections. Demographic section contained gender and age. Other section contained items used to measure geriatric loneliness and activity of daily life.

Data on perceived loneliness, depressive, and anxiety symptoms were collected using the 8-item University of California, Los Angeles Loneliness Scale (ULS-8). It consists of 8 items that the respondents made a choice on a 4-point Likert scale of strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). It has a reliability Cronbach's alpha of .75, which is acceptable.

The Katz Index of independence in activities of daily living (Katz ADL) was used to assess the ability of participants to perform ADL independently. It evaluated the ability of the participants to perform seven functions. The scale had been used in Nigeria by scholars such as Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019); and found reliable. For this study, it has a reliability Cronbach's alpha of .71, which is acceptable.

The researcher visited and administered the instruments on the participants in Ikot-Ekpene metropolis, after due explanation to the participants. The participants were assured of confidentiality. Each participant filled the instrument by themselves. However, participants that could not write were allowed to express their opinion verbally and an assistant (acquaintance) was allowed to help them tick the opinion. Afterward, the researcher collected the instruments from the participants. Data collected was analysed using simple percentage and Pearson product moment correlation.

Results

Levels of Loneliness of the Participants

Age	Percentage
61 -65 years	16.25%
66 -70 years	21.23%
71 -75 years	27.10%
76 -80 years	33.33%

According to the result on Table 1, the level of prevalence of loneliness is averagely 24.48%; while there is increment as the age moves up 16.25%; 21.23%; 27.10% and 33.33% respectively.

Relationship between Low Activity of Daily Life and Loneliness of Geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpene Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Table 1: Low Activity of Daily Life and Loneliness of Geriatrics

Variable	\bar{X}	SD	R	P value	Remark
Loneliness	45.00	3.19			
			.701**	<.01	Significant
Low Activity of Daily Life	41.05	3.13			

According to Table 1, low activity of daily life has significant direct relationship with loneliness ($r = -.631$, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis one was thus rejected. This implies that when there is low activity of daily life, geriatrics are likely to experience more loneliness. Thus, there is significant direct relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpene metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Discussion

This study affirmed that the prevalence level of loneliness among older people in Ikot-Ekpene, Nigeria is high. The study revealed that the higher the age, the higher the prevalence level of loneliness of the participants. The findings are consistent with prior research that reported prevalence of loneliness among older adults (Igbokwe, Ejeh, Agbaje, 2020; Ojagbemi and Gureje, 2019, Ojembe and Ebe, 2018). Several reasons have been given for this trend, among which is the fact that old people often suffer social exclusion. In addition, they face a lot of health challenges which often confine them to a place. Similarly, Igbokwe, Ejeh, Agbaje, (2020) argued that a lot of young adults often migrate to another country, leaving their parents behind in Nigeria; and that this often make most of these parents to be living alone, without the presence of their children. Another plausible reason is that since the world is changing, most elderlies do not have the cognitive and physical capacity to flow with the dynamics of the new order, hence they feel alienated and isolated

which often aggravate their level of loneliness. More so, a significant number of these elderlies might have lost their spouses and friends, thereby making them deprived of the needed companionship.

According to the finding of this study, there is a significant direct relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpene metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This result indicates that when an old age person is not highly participating in daily activities, such individual could suffer more of loneliness. The result of this study confirmed the observation made by Holmen, et al., (1994) that low activity of daily life (ADL) score correlates with loneliness among aged persons. Ojagbemi and Gureje (2019) (2019) suggested that poor social relationship (low social activity) is a major determinant of loneliness among the elderlies. In addition, Ojembe and Ebe (2019) gave low involvement in daily life activities as one of the reasons for loneliness among the elderlies. At post-retirement age, older people are at risk of loneliness since they could not engage in locomotive and non-locomotive activities as they used to. It is suggestive that when individuals do not engage in any activity, they tend to begin to think about a lot of things some of which could lead to guiltiness, self-blame, and other negative feelings. These negative feelings could aggravate the bio-psychological condition of old people.

Conclusion

Based on the result of this study, there is significant relationship between low activity of daily life and loneliness of geriatrics in Ikot-Ekpene Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This study has revealed that loneliness is prevalent among the old people or geriatric. The study also showed that low activity of daily life is related to the experience of loneliness of the geriatrics.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that:

- special target programs should be designed for the elderlies that could help them in social engagement.
- Counselling psychologists should be engaged to provide remediation and therapeutic intervention for the elderlies.
- Post-retirement adjustment program should be organized for those that are about to retire from active service.
- Retired individuals should be encouraged to join community services, such as Road Marshal, community development association, awareness program for youths and adolescents, etc. Children should visit their parents frequently.

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