

## Challenges to Educational Attainment of the non-Educated Aged

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### Abstract

*The government seems not to be sensitive to elderly demands and their needs for education. The elderly themselves may have other reasons or hindrances that may deprive them of formal educational attainment. Those who reach the age of 60 and above are regarded as the elderly. The problem of this study was to ascertain the hindrances to educational attainment of the non educated elderly in Enugu state. The purpose of the study was specifically to ascertain the problems of the elderly that hinder them from educational attainment. The design used for the study was survey design. The population of the study was all the aged individuals in Enugu State who were sixty years and above. The population of the study was 194,906 elderly persons in Enugu State. The sample for the study consisted of five hundred non educated elderly persons in Enugu State, purposively selected. One research question guided the study. Questionnaire and oral interview were the instruments used for the study. Three experts validated the instrument. Data was collected through direct delivery of questionnaire to respondents through interpretation, using their native dialect and oral interview. The oral interview was qualitatively analyzed, bringing together similar variables. The findings showed that government insensitivity to the concerns of the elderly, lack of schools for the elderly, lack of particular teachers for the elderly, financial stress, poor medical treatment, illness, negative attitude from young ones, communication gap with the youths, lack of understanding of the value of education, inadequate diet, poor housing, lack of counselling services, lack of recreational facilities, shame and lack of security constitute hindrances for the non educated elderly in their educational attainment. The study has implication for guidance and counselling. The researcher recommended among others that a comprehensive and vigorous awareness campaign on the need for the education of the elderly should be carried out by guidance counsellors to enable the elderly to realize the need for their education.*

**Keyword:** Education, Guidance & Counselling, Non-educated

### Introduction

Human life passes through various developmental stages - from infancy, through adolescence to adulthood (which includes old age). The United Nations (1997: 23) notes that two very important and sensitive stages of life are childhood which is the beginning of life and old age which is the end of life". Consequently, the improvement to life to reach old age which is an aspect of adulthood has always been the concern of man. Those who reach old age are regarded as the elderly or the aged. There is generally an age-limit that qualifies persons to be included in the bracket of old age/elderly. In Nigeria today and in the study area too, from sixty years and above is generally accepted as old age or the elderly.

As people add years to their lives, particularly from sixty years and above, there seem to be in their lives gradual physical, social, and cognitive deteriorate attributes. This situation may create problems to them which may require assistance for them. This may also affect them educationally for those of them who were not opportune to attend formal schooling at younger age and who desire to make up at elderly age. Education is a major tool for national development. It is in recognition of this that the Federal government is making concise efforts to ensure that all citizens of the country get educated by the year 2020. Despite their efforts, attention seems only to be paid to the education of the children and the youth, thus forgetting the elderly populace who had no opportunity to attend formal education early in their life time. This is so, in spite of the contributions the elderly populace makes towards the development of the country, especially when they are formally educated.

Getting old is good for individuals because the only alternative of old age is premature death. Old people are great assets. They have a lot to contribute to their families, communities and to the country. Some elderly contribute immensely in voluntary/unpaid work such as agriculture and other informal sectors. The life course resources (their wisdom inclusive) acquired by elders offer a great opportunity to be harnessed and made use of. The elderly are described or looked on as people with wisdom. The aged are sources of societal cultural heritage. They cater often for their children and grand children and provide informal education for them. Some of them act as midwives and nurses in some rural areas with less established health care, as experience has shown; also, the aged, work as nannies; salesmen, traditional doctors, catechists etc.

Old age is characterized by a lot of problems. This is because, as one gets older, the body weakens and the individual is prone to a good number of diseases and afflictions such as diabetes, cancer, arthritis, hypertension, orthroporosis, as experience has shown. Kimmel (1994) posits that the aged are susceptible to various sicknesses. Movement is restricted seriously because of such physiological problems associated with sinusitis, arthritis. For Bromley (1998) because of the general weakening and debilitating condition of the aged, certain psychopathological problems such as psychosis may begin to occur; this is more in women than in men. Brody (1997) also states that ageing is a developmental process which is besieged with so many problems and that often, the ageing person cannot grapple with all these problems effectively, hence the society comes to the aid of the ageing person. Agate (1999) also pointed out that ageing begins significantly to affect the performance of the daily task of the aged and can even spoil enjoyment of their usual pleasures. Some older people are abandoned and left to fend for themselves. Even when they are taken care of, there may be the problem of inter-generational gap between them and the younger ones taking care of them (Blau, 1983). The work of the Guidance Counsellor which is a helping task in the lives of these aged becomes imperative. It is however common to see some of these elderly in the study area being accused as witches and sorcerers, even by their own children, thus making life miserable for these elderly. This situation can as well affect the elderly educational attainment since they may not concentrate.

Experience has shown that old age is not fancied by people. Old age in most cases is derogatorily used. People want to live long but abhor the term old age. As a result of this, most people fake their age. To call somebody an old person is like a curse. In the study area, many people think that old people cannot think well and are weak people. In the midst of all these, coupled with the societal view of the elderly, the elderly are bound to suffer anxiety and poor self concept and evaluation. This will adversely affect their life satisfaction, adjustment and above all, their educational

attainment and contribution to the society. This has implication for counselling. This is so because counselling is a service given to individuals to help them realize themselves better and live adjusted and happier lives. According to Okeke (2003) counselling is a helping relationship involving the counsellor and the client in which the counsellor uses his professional knowledge and skills to assist the client to attain proper development and maturity, improved functioning and improved ability to cope with problems. It is against this background that the study on the hindrances to education of the non educated elderly in Enugu State was conceived.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education is a major item in the developmental process of any nation, Nigeria inclusive. Development brings about positive change in human life. This is why the Federal government of Nigeria has paid attention to the education of all its citizens. It is the desire of the Nigerian government that by the year 2020, all its citizens must be formerly educated. Achievement of education for all by the year 2020 in Nigeria, especially in the study area may seem to be a mirage since the government seem to only pay attention to the education of the children and the youths; thus neglecting the elderly populace. To be able to achieve education for all by the year 2020, everybody, especially the elderly must be carried along. The elderly (also called the aged) are people who have reached the age of sixty and above. Many of these elderly did not have the opportunity to go through the formal educational system at their younger age. The elderly have so much to contribute to national development. This elderly also have a lot of problems to battle with which may hinder them in their educational pursuit too. Apart from health problems, they may also battle with derogatory attitudes towards them from the society, financial matters and generational gap from the young ones. Problems that may hinder these elderly in their educational career need to be identified. It is the job of the professional guidance counsellor to assist individuals with challenges especially educational challenges to enable such individual(s) to live well adjusted lives. Based on this therefore, the problem of this study is what are the hindrances to educational attainment of the non educated elderly in the study area?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Broadly speaking, the purpose of the study was to find out the educational challenges of the non educated elderly. Specifically, the study investigated the hindrances to educational attainment of the non educated aged.

### **Significance of the Study**

The result of the study will have practical significance to government policy makers, the media, researchers, students, guidance counsellors, social workers, medical personnel, psychologists and nutritionists, World Health Organizations United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), educationalist, caregivers, the elderly and individuals generally.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on the hindrances to the educational attainment of the non educated elderly in Enugu State. The study covers men and women who are sixty years and above who did not go through the formal education process in all the senatorial zones of Enugu State.

### **Research Questions**

The study provided answer to the research question:

1. What are the hindrances to the educational attainment of the non educated aged?

## Methodology

The design used for the study was survey research design. This design is considered appropriate for the study. The area of the study is Enugu State. This comprised the three senatorial zones of Enugu State namely – Enugu North, Enugu West and Enugu East. The elderly in these senatorial zones are people who have reached sixty years and above. The researcher chose the area because of her personal encounter with many of these elderly as an indigene of the study area. Many of these elderly are abandoned by their children to live in cities, thus, making life difficult for them.

The population of the study comprised all the elderly men and women in Enugu State who have reached the age of sixty and above. Based on the records available at the national Population Commission Enugu, 2006 census figures, there are 194,906 elderly persons (93,515 elderly men and 101,391 elderly women) in Enugu State.

The sample for the study consisted of 500 elderly persons drawn from 3 senatorial zones of Enugu State namely Enugu North, Enugu East and Enugu West. Multi-stage sampling technique was used. First stage was sampling of local government areas from each senatorial zone using purposive sampling technique. Four local government areas were purposively sampled from Enugu North senatorial zone. Three local government areas each were purposively sampled from Enugu East and Enugu West senatorial zones. Second, on each local government area, 5 autonomous communities were purposively sampled. Thirdly, from each autonomous community 10 elderly persons were randomly sampled. Each sampled elderly automatically becomes a respondent

The instrument for data collection for the study was structured questionnaire and oral interview. The questionnaire was structured on a modified four-point likert rating scale. Also, the oral interview schedule was based on the hindrances to educational attainment of the non educated elderly. The response format for the structured questionnaire was the four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The interview guide sought to elicit information on hindrances of educational attainment of the non educated elderly. To establish validity of the instrument that was used for the study, the questionnaire was subjected to face validation by giving the questionnaire to three experts in the field of Guidance and Counselling, Measurement and Evaluation and Health and Physical Education (all from Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka) for scrutiny. Based on their corrections, the researcher modified the instrument.

As part of the reliability exercise, a trial testing was conducted using twenty (20) elderly men and women from Ivo local government area of Ebonyi State which although was outside the geographical area of the study, is considered to have similar characteristics. A co-efficient internal consistency for the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha. The result showed positive reliability of 0.8. The data for the study was administered and collected with the help five research assistants. The researcher trained these assistants personally for the purpose of the administration and collection. In administering the questionnaire, a direct delivery approach was used in which case, the questionnaire was administered and collected on the spot to avoid high incidence of instrument loss. Also, interpretation of the instrument to the respondents in their native dialect was done. The researcher also administered the oral interview using the oral interview schedule with the trained assistants.

To analyze the data, mean and standard deviation were used. Research question was answered using mean score. On a four point scale, a mean of 2.50 was the cut off; which means that any items with

a mean of 2.50 and above was deemed to be a hindrance. Also, anyone with less than 2.50 was deemed not to be a hindrance to the elderly. The oral interview was qualitatively analyzed; bringing out areas of similarities and differences with the quantitative data.

## Results

This area provides the questions that guided the study.

### Research question

What are the hindrances to the educational attainment on the non educated elderly in the study area? In answering this research question, frequency counts and the mean scores of the respondents under the hindrances to non educated elderly education in the questionnaire were computed and analyzed. The score of 2.50 was adopted as the cut-off point in deciding a variable to be a problem. The summary of the analysis of data is presented in table 1.

**Table 1**

Mean score of the hindrances to education of non educated elderly.

Item	Details	$\bar{X}$ Score	SD	Decision
1.	Denial of right	2.58	2.09	A problem
2.	Financial stress	3.15	0.84	A problem
3.	Community discrimination	2.10	0.97	Not a problem
4.	Lack of information	2.50	1.00	A problem
5.	Lack of adequate medical treatment	2.88	0.91	A problem
6.	Illness	2.91	0.87	A problem
7.	Isolation	2.30	1.00	Not a problem
8.	Negative attitude from young ones	2.62	1.04	A problem
9.	Lack of study centres	2.58	1.05	A problem
10.	Lack of care from anyone	2.01	0.91	Not a problem
11.	Communication gap with youth	2.80	0.89	A problem
12.	Lack of understanding by others	2.52	0.93	A problem
13.	Neglect	2.55	1.00	A problem
14.	Lack of provision of study materials	2.96	0.91	A problem
15.	Inadequate care from family members	2.29	1.03	Not a problem
16.	Lack of instructors	2.59	1.00	A problem
17.	Shame	2.52	1.03	A problem
18.	Lack of comprehension	2.54	0.94	Not a problem
19.	Lack of instructional materials	2.55	0.99	A problem
20.	Cannot understand lessons	2.56	0.95	A problem
21.	Violence	2.06	0.96	Not a problem
22.	Inadequate diet	2.58	1.05	A problem
23.	Lack of basic social services	2.74	0.96	A problem
24.	Crowded public transport	2.48	1.02	Not a problem
25.	Inadequate accommodation	2.43	0.97	Not a problem
26.	Poor housing	2.53	0.98	A problem
27.	Lack of counselling services	2.90	0.96	A problem
28.	Lack of recreational facilities	3.04	0.93	A problem
29.	Lack of security	2.75	0.98	A problem
30.	Poor government support	2.58	1.09	A problem

The result above shows that denial of right (2.58), financial stress (3.15), lack of adequate medical treatment (2.88), illness (2.91) lack of information(2.50), negative attitude from young ones (2.62), lack of study centre (2.58), communication gap with youths (2.80), lack of understanding by others (2.52), Shame (2.52), Lack of instructional materials (2.52), Lack of comprehension (2.54), Lack of provision of study materials (2.96), Lack of instructors (2.52), inadequate diet (2.58), lack of basic social services (2.74), lack of counselling services (2.90), poor housing (2.53), lack of recreational facilities (3.04), lack of security (2.75) and Poor government support (2.58). The result of the study shows that the areas that pose hindrances to the educational attainment of the non educated elderly include denial of right (2.58), financial stress (3.15), lack of adequate medical treatment (2.88), illness (2.91) lack of information(2.50), negative attitude from young ones (2.62), lack of study centre (2.58), communication gap with youths (2.80), lack of understanding by others (2.52), Shame (2.52), Lack of instructional materials (2.52), Lack of comprehension (2.54), Lack of provision of study materials (2.96), Lack of instructors (2.52), inadequate diet (2.58), lack of basic social services (2.74), lack of counselling services (2.90), poor housing (2.53), lack of recreational facilities (3.04), lack of security (2.75) and Poor government support (2.58) constitute problems to the elderly. From the above details, financial stress with a mean score of 3.15 is the highest area the aged have problem. The least area that pose problem to the aged is denial of right and lack of understanding by others with mean scores of 2.52 each. The result of the study is in line with the findings of Kimmel, (1994) who posed that the aged are susceptible to various sicknesses. Blau, (1983) also noted that the aged may suffer for gap between older and younger people.

### **Analysis of Oral Interview**

Oral interview for the study was used to elicit information from the aged who are illiterate and cannot fill the questionnaire. Also, some literate ones who were not disposed to fill the questionnaire were granted oral interview. The oral interview schedule was based on the research questions:-

1. What are the hindrances facing you in attainment of education as an aged?

### **Result of oral interview of the hindrances of educational attainment of a non educated aged.**

The result of oral interview with the elderly was qualitatively analyzed bringing similar answers. The result of the oral interview showed that illness and lack of finances formed the highest problem of the elderly. The elderly lamented that they have no centre for studying/school, and lack of teachers to teach them. Other hindrances the elderly mentioned are lack of opportunity to be heard, especially by the leaders, shame due to their age and yet not formerly educated, fear, government insensitivity to the elderly concerns, lack of teachers to teach them, the elderly lack of understanding of value of education, difficulty in cooking, bathing and washing cloths. Other elderly complained that the government has not been fair to them by not supporting them. They also complained that they do not think they will understand lessons again due to old age, etc.

The result of the oral interview showed that illness is a major challenge of the elderly. Many of them have suffered so much loss resulting from death of children, friends and relations. This has deep psychological impact on them and invariably affect their zeal for education.. They complain of no centre where they can gather and share ideas and learn too. The elderly complain about financial difficulty. The money they get is not sufficient to take care off their needs. Some of them (few) are being catered for by their children. Others are still training their children. Failure of the young ones to be close to them is another problem they complain of. Often the young ones do not really understand them and would want to have their way in decision making, the elderly lack counselling

services. Most of them do not know at all that they have any business with guidance counsellors. This may be as a result of lack of counselling centres in the area and lack of proper information on counselling. Also the elderly with something doing as a means a livelihood complained less of these problems in the study area.

In all, the aged in the study area is faced with many problems. Some of them aggravate these problems by taking to drunkenness as the way of coping. Many of the younger ones may fail to be close to the elderly due to preoccupation with their work or lack of interest in discussing with them due to generation gap. Their views are likely to vary in most things. Other problems they complained include government non-challant attitude to them, insults by some youths which makes them ashamed to bring themselves to be taught by the young ones they know when they were born, desire to live longer, no such gathering to ease off tension through discussion, lack of recreation, gap with the youth, internal worry about nothing, and frequent meditation.

### **Implications of the findings:**

Based on the findings of the study, the following implications were deduced. The result of the finding shows that financial stress is the highest area of problem for the elderly. There are other major areas of problem to the elderly such as denial of right, poor medical attention, among others. The implication of the study can be seen on national development, family life, and to the guidance counsellor.

1. The study has implication to National development. From the result above, it can be seen that both aged men and women suffer financial stress. This may also be due to the inability of these elderly to train up their children early to assist them financially at their old age and general financial crunch in the country. Based on this, the contribution of the elderly to national development may be affected. The financial stress and depression these elderly encounter reduce their productivity in the nation and their interest in continuing their education. This will make the government's dream of education for all by the year 2020 look like a mirage. If these elderly are empowered financially, they will pick interest in the formal education and also contribute in economic development of the country. Some of them are still very resourceful such that they can still engage in one economic activity or the other that can improve the country's per capital income.  
Also, the poor medical attention that these elderly receive not only affects them but also affects the contribution their caregivers would have given for the development of the nation. This is so because their caregivers focus more on them instead of focusing on their own individual contribution to the nation. Above all, these elderly cannot be sick and be thinking of getting educated.
2. The study has implication for family living. The result of the study shows that negative attitude from young ones, communication gap with the youths, lack of understanding by others, poor housing, and lack of counselling activities constitute hindrances to education attainment of the elderly. These may be so because the elderly may not be comfortable studying under this kind of environment. Some of the young ones look at the elderly with pity as people who do not have anything to offer. This makes the elderly ones feel very bad. The elderly often feel irked due to some behaviours of the youths. Most elderly desire counselling services but there is no such services. This has led many of them to continue to swallow their problems and die in silence. Their inability to find who to confide in makes most elderly to die in silence.

3. The study also has Implication for the Guidance Counsellor. The guidance counsellor will use his/her position to help them to live well adjusted lives and also have love for education. The guidance counsellor should at different intervals and different places organise workshops and seminars to the aged on the importance of formal education, respect of government plan for the citizens and empowering the elderly. The guidance counsellor should in this regard, address the issue of generational gap since part of the elderly hindrance to education as result shows is lack of understanding between the elderly and the youth as well as communication gap with the youth. The guidance counsellor should use his/her position to foster good understanding between the elderly and the younger ones.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the result, the following recommendations are made –

1. There should be sensitization of the elderly on the need for formal education and education for all as a tool for national development and life time empowerment
2. The government should back up their dream with adequate provision of human and material resources for the achievement of their goal for education for all by the year 2020.
3. Guidance counsellors should constantly reach out to the elderly in personal and group counselling activities touching such areas as family life, generational gap, values of education and contributions to national development, elderly empowerment and the like.
4. The non educated elderly should avail themselves of the opportunity of getting formerly educated and contributing their quota in national development.
5. Government should build schools and provide teachers for adult learners and not just abandon them like that.

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