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ELDERLY ABUSE AND CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR ADVOCACY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Elderly abuse is a significant problem in Nigeria. The aged have the fastest growing segment of the population world-wide and this growth is mainly taking place in developing countries, and as the number increases, there is no safety net in place for most of the elderly already living in the least developed and developing countries today. Traditionally in Nigeria, family is valued as a source where family needs are met; however, challenges have weakened most family networks that it is now difficult, if not impossible, to provide support to the elderly. Some of the elderly while in their active years have worked satisfactorily for the good of humanity. Now, they are helpless as a reason of inability to function well and help themselves; hence, the government reciprocity policy for social support despite the physiological retirement is important. Currently, the country still lacks appropriate policies and programs to support the growing number of elders. It means therefore that the prevalent problems of elderly abuse will keep increasing into the future. This will create major social, psychological and public health problems. Therefore, this paper assessed the elderly challenges in Nigeria, with the theoretical explanation of social disengagement and self-management theory to understand the genesis, nature and prevalence of the elder's problem in Nigeria. The study concludes that the legislative and advocacy policies development with the lens of other nations and will reduce or combat the phenomena in Nigeria.

Keywords: elderly abuse, challenges, advocacy, policy development, Nigeria.

Background of the study

Social gerontology is one of the dominant disciplines in the study of ageing, and the geriatrics with the philosophy of adult protection. The way in which elder abuse issues and responses are treated depend on the perspective adopted (UNDESA, 2013). Thus, according to WHO in public health perspective developed by Action of Elder Abuse UK described elder abuse as a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where

there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person (WHO, 2018). In this, human rights and public health perspectives are evident, with the intersecting fields of thinking and concerns related to many areas including the family or public abuse, and/or violence against elder and disability.

The interest, the right and the needs of older adult need to be informed by human right conceptualizations that emphasis self-determination, autonomy, and respect (Department of Health, Victoria, 2012)). Though, it is a general phenomenon that the challenges of elders are inevitable but it becomes significant when it taking unusual position to manifest. According to international network for prevention of elder abuse (INPEA), and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2015), elderly abuse as an intentional act or failure to act by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult. Thus, the position of trust exists in family, among friends, neighbors, relatives, and even in government but needed not to be violated.

Therefore, the speedy increased of the elderly today signifies serious concerns in the matter related to the aged in the societies especially in Nigeria. In this, the world population statistics (2013) indicated that aged constitute 841 million of the total world population, and the global share of person aged 60 years and above according to United Nations, (2013) increased from 9.2 percent in 1990 to 11.7 percent in 2013, and projected to increase to 21.1 percent by 2050. This implies that the continued increase of life expectancy of elderly indicate that aging phenomenon needs more active policy and attention.

However, ageing is a continue changing of aged population at 60 years and above (Judith, 2014).The United State Census Bureau, (2007) argued that the percentage of the aged residing in the developing countries include Nigeria in relation to the global population was 64 percent (that is 436,480,000) in 2006. In this, the sub-Sahara Africa reported over 35 million aged and expected to double by 2030 (Friday and Ifeanyi, 2014).
This also confirmed that the sheer number of older people (elderly) is growing more rapidly in sub-Sahara Africa than in the developed world, while Nigeria currently placed first as having the highest number of the aged in Sub-Sahara Africa. Therefore, this paper then assessed elderly abuse and challenges in Nigeria with the advocacy and policy development in other countries to be emulates in the society.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Overview of Elderly and its Importance in Nigeria Society

Nigeria society indeed gives much respect for culture and this replicate in the ageing process of elders in the shore of the country. This, for instance, put an old people in position of honour. However, elderly do not only seem as custodians of culture and tradition but as well the veritable source of wisdom and knowledge for guidance and direction in the Nigeria traditional Setting (Judith,2014).Elderly held with high esteem and are to be consulted by the young members of the society based on their responsibility, wisdom and the experiences at old age.

In Nigeria traditionally society, transition to old age are involved processes and time. In South-West Nigeria of Ondo State, for example, the practice involves homage and ceremonies

among other to mark the transition to aged group called: igoke-agba. It is an avenue for the children, extended family, well-wishers both in diaspora to play the important roles on the event with the presence of traditional rulers and other dignitary from far and near to ensure smooth transition.

In same vein, the Owo people of same state (Ondo), according to Togonu-Bickersteth and Akinyemi, (2014); Judith, (2014), used Ero festival to mark the importance attached to old age as the time of high respect and fulfilled responsibility. This according to them, emphases the ageing as a time with dignity and the important of attaining another stage of life as aged. This however, cut across almost all the tribe in Nigeria, for example, among the Ibo people of South-Eastern,"Ngwo", is the practice of Ori Enya ceremony for titled aged for both men and women, and Amushi for aged men; while orinandu and Adukwurum ceremony done for women who lived to see their grandchildren.

In all, elderly abuse manifest when care required and support are deprived. When the attention ranges from formal and informal that comprises all forms of service from health care, counselling, material, financial or other related goods are not available or sufficient. According to Dokpesi and Omoruyi, (2014), the health status of the elderly most time determines by the support received from individual, communities or government. However, in Nigeria, elderly psycho-social support is very limited in this side of developing world, majority of elderly have been evidently abusing by impoverished and abandonments left their care and support to charity and arms begging (Akanni & Ambrose, 2014).

The elderly support is a call for individual, group and nations. Thus, in Brazil, South Africa, Australia, Botswana and India for example, the reality of this life treating insecurity has prompted some non-contributory social pension scheme and other social assistance programme and organizations to cater for elderly, while in Nigeria the reverse is the case. In this, hardly only two state: Ekiti and Osun States of South –western out of 36 states with the federal capital territory (Abuja) designed a programme to assisted and supported the elderly in a way of complimenting what they probably might receive from their children and loved ones (Aboderin, 2004; Judith, 2014).This is serious that for instance, elderly among the Ijebu people rely wholly on their ability to save and made some investments for old age as against poverty (wahab and Isiugo, 2008).

The implication of these according to Peterson (2002), that elderly or rather "senior citizen" who have acquired skill and whose leadership and consultative roles in the society cannot be undermined should have their needs integrated into policy at the old age, this is in-line with united nation principle for elderly persons to be care for and their needs articulated into social and economic policies (WHO, 2015).

Elderly Abuse: Supports and Limitation in Nigeria

According to Australian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse in 1999 define elder abuse as any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Thus, abuse may be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and/or neglect. Therefore, in World Health Organization (2002), elderly abuse comprises three type accordingly: neglect including

isolation, abandonment and social exclusion; secondly, violation of human, legal and medical rights; thirdly, deprivation of choices, decision, status, finances, respect and honour. In these, abuse of elderly were groups such as physical abuse, physical neglect, verbal assaults, materials exploitation, sexual abuse and neglect of the environment and violation of rights (Hoover and PoIson, 2014).Elderly abuse can hereby be described as the intentional actions that causes harm and risk at the detriment of elderly wellbeing in society.

This for instance, can be observed when caregivers failed in their responsibility to provide the needs and good living conditions for aged. Therefore, the relevance of social support system is paramount to ensure the elderly care and supports to avoid more challenges at the detriment of elderly wellbeing when left the responsibilities for only the adult child, since only the child who is well to do can handle such task. Though, its natural reciprocal bound that occur between parents and children at the point of birth till when they aged. Thus, elderly at old age are helpless and now depend on their child to pay back the sacrifices made from infant to the adulthood.

According to Dokpesi and Omoruyi (2014), child at birth is helpless and may not survive without the care of the family members especially the parents, based on their responsibility, basic roles and challenges. In this, to him, family represent first environment where the child study the lesson of life, and in this, parent represent the first teachers that provide training and the accepted way of behaviors, then, later in adulthood after several years of hard work, when parents would have become weak as a result of old age, it is now expected that they depend on their child to assume the caregiving role in their ageing process.

This for instance, in Amaike (2009) in the study of livelihood and living conditions of formal sector retirees in Lagos state Nigeria, she proved that the significant numbers of retirees had no surviving child with a higher proportion among male retirees compared to female retirees. This established that childless aged or elderly are more likely to be neglected and vulnerable to suffer multiple deprivation if there is no security from elsewhere especially in government. Hence, the employment status of elderly child is signified as one of the predictors of likelihood to discharge his/her filial piety (care) and also the determinant of the quality and types of support the child will made available to their aged. Nowadays in Nigeria, the adult child keeps struggling and been depriving of their rightful social economics status due to challenges and unemployment (Balogun and Iduemre, 2020), this automatically bring the case to revised. While in Bola,(2014)claimed that the proportion of the aged respondents whose adult children were gainfully employed that supposed to support their aged was 30.8%.As a result, more than average population (50.5%)of the aged received supports from other relations instead of the adult child. The implication of this is that the elderly whose child gainfully employed might had access to move financial and material supports than those whose child were not gainfully employed but still were not buoyant as result of challenges. Therefore, according to her, the percentage of children that regularly supported their elderly were 188(14.2%) while 232(17.6%) were not regular.

For this, the wellbeing of elderly would have been ascertained, if the combined efforts from government which is formal support be operate on 50%; the family (with the children) 40%; and others10% respectively be achieved or set in place. Though the expectation that

government should be responsible for welfare at old age is in tandem with global best practices where the provision of social protection programme and services to address elderly challenges in both social security, medical care, financial and others related were in place (Balogun and Iduemre, 2020).

Signs of Elderly Abuse in Society

The abuser of elderly can trace amongst the government, children and family members, spouse, and other caregivers in the institutional setting, especially in care or facility center. The signs or symptoms of elderly abuse overlap with symptoms of mental deterioration, frequency arguments or tension between the caregiver and the elderly or the sudden changes in the personality (Hoover and Polson, 2014), while behaviors may be the indicators of elder's abuse.

According to Lawrence, (2019), the physical abuse- usually observed when unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, waits, scars; broken bones, sprains or dislocation; when a report of drug overdose or an apparent failure to take medication regularly; when broken eyeglasses/frames; and when signs of being restrained was on high rate. These and other are parading in developing world especially in Nigeria.

Also, according to him, emotional abuse detected when threatening, belittling/controlling caregivers' behavior; behavior from the elders that mimics dementia such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling to themselves. In sexual abuse, the sign observed when bruises around breast or genital, unexplained vaginal or anal bleeding, torn, stained or bloody underclothing. However, in neglect or self-neglect abuse, the signs started manifesting when unusual weight loss, malnutrition, dehydration; when untreated problems such as bed sores; unsanitary living conditions like bugs, dirt, soiled bedding and clothes; being left dirty or unbathed; unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather; unsafe living conditions that is, where no heat/running water, faulty electrical wiring and or desertion of the elders at a public place.

In same vein, the financial exploitation warning signs began when significant withdrawals from the elders account, when sudden changes in the elder's financial condition or items such as cash missing, addition of names to the senior's signature cannot be properly explained or with no undertaken. Lastly, the health fraud of elderly abuse sign manifest for instance, in billings for the medical service, over-medication or under-medication, inadequate care when bills are paid in full, and problems with the care facilities. This may signify poorly trained, insufficient staff, and over-crowding patients (Balogun and Orukotan, 2019)

Elderly Abuse and its psycho-social Risk

The elderly condition deteriorates and deserves attention as it may cause significant stress and challenges. Thus, elderly stress lead to mental or physical health problems that left caregiver to neglect the elders in care. Bay of Plenty District Health Board, (2012), thought it is difficult to take care of senior citizen(elders) who has plenty need, therefore it risky to be elderly when age bring with infirmities and depending.

According to Lawrence (2019), both the demands of caregivers and the needs of the elderly creates situation in which abuse is more likely to occur. Thus, as a result of inability of

caregiver due to lack of resources and the stress involves, the following risk factors of abuse are inevitable: depression- as a result of lack of support from other potential caregiver; and the perception that taking care of elders are burdensome and without emotional reward at the detriment of the elderly persons, since illness or dementia kills faster than ever (Bay of Plenty District Health Board, 2012).

This for instance, elderly and caregiver in institutional setting can experience stress at various levels that lead to elders' abuse. In nursing home for instance, staff prone to elderly abuse when lack training, having too many responsibilities, unsuited to caregiving or working under poor conditions (Balogun and Orukotan, 2019).

Elderly Abuse and its Possible Preventions in Nigeria Society

The emotionally disconnect overwhelmed by the daily needs of the elderly can be treated. Hence, the possible steps in preventing elderly abuse or neglect according to (Lawrence, 2019)are as follows:

Taking immediate steps to relieve stress and burn out is a major contributor to elderly and can be treated by regularly practicing stress-relieving technique exercises. Thus, another step is request help-this can be done through friends, relatives, or local respite care agencies or find an adult daycare programme (Barry, 2015), since every caregiver needs to take regular breaks from the stress of caring for an elder and to attend to their own needs.

Other step according to him is learned techniques-this enable getting anger under control; take care of yourself because inadequate rest likely to succumb anger. That is, eat a healthy diet, get regular exercise or take care medical needs; seek help for depression-since there are plenty thing to boost mood and outlook to overcome the problems. This can help caregivers at risk of depression. Also, part of the steps is to find a support group for caregiver of the elderly. Therefore, sharing concerns and experiences enable to gain valuable tips and insight into caring for an elder and others facing similar challenges can help relieve the isolation.

However, get help for any substance abuse issues-the actions to address drug or alcohol abuse, and professional help-time to seek therapist especially when unable to help. Thus, to Lawrence (2019), the following can also help prevent abuse of an elderly person especially as a concerned friend or family members: call and visit as often as possible, that is, helps the elders to see someone as trusted and confidante. Also, offer to stay with elder so the caregiver can have a break, and if possible, on a regular basis.

Lastly, monitor the elder's medication to ensure the amounts being taken correspond with the prescription dates, and watch for financial abuse with the elders consent or permission to check their bank accounts and credit statements for unauthorized transaction and identify the signs and be reported immediately. This is because elderly in one way or other have exhausted their active years for humanity and now that they are helpless, it's expected to pay them back for good.

Theoretical Orientation

The social disengagement theory helps to understand the nature, dimension and effect of the aged living in the continent of Nigeria. Thus, Ugiagbe, (2018)argued that elderly is lonely and feeling or expressing sadness especially when becoming like an illness (melancholic) because they are socially isolated, may be as a result of loss of contacts with others which they perceive as inadequate, and the limited contact had personal consequences on them.

The implication is that people with poor or limited social contact were likely to be at risk of social isolation (Ugiagbe, 2018). Thus, the psycho-social adjustment to ageing comes through a reduction of activities, in Victor et al (2000), shows that engagement in social interaction is far more beneficial and gainful for health and wellbeing of older people. This indicated that social isolation has linked with increased mortality rates for the aged (over 65 years) and as a result elevated blood pressure, increased propensity to dementia, and dementia and suicide (Gutzman, 2000 in Ugiagbe, 2018).

In same vein, to Ugiagbe, most elderly or retirees move out of their place of work to their villages or where to manage their little or meagre pension and their saving in the process they lose their contacts and are isolated. In this, the theory recommends that there should be group activities, discussion, self-help, social activation and bereavement support. To him, the psychological therapy should be targeted in specific groups of similar problems, historical experience and orientation. For instance, women retirees, and widowed amongst others.

However, the professionals should use more than one method and best practice across range of outcome and there should be evaluation process at regular periods to see the need for change, reinforcement or alteration of the strategies, personnel change and equipment (Ugiagbe (2018). Thus, this will enable them to manage the psychosocial on health and all. This confirmed the important of elderly support as a "call to live" from individuals, community and government to compliment the self-management of wellbeing theory (Steverink, 2001).

Conversely, the social disengagement theory and self-management of well being theory help in understanding the genesis, nature and prevalence of the elderly problems. Some elderly is in their pitiable situation due to self-inflicted problems, for example, many in their active service years failed to plan for their future and this hereby compounds their problems when they disengaged from service (Ugiagbe, 2018). In this, the failure of the government at the local, state and federal levels to make adequate provision for the welfare of the aged resulted in more complex nature of the problems in the society especially in Nigerian, as it grows negatively to affect their social relationship with others, their self-worth and results in isolation exclusion, self-condemnation and pity (Ugiagbe, 2018).

Therefore, the theories establish the nexus between self-inflicted problems, systemic problems and failure on the part of the government in the context of the traumatic and pitiable situation of the elderly in Nigeria, then the way forward?

Elderly Legislation, Advocacy and Policy Development: Look beyond Nigeria

It is relevant in the societies to stand against the violation and abuse of senior citizen (elderly) especially in Nigeria. In this, despite an all-encompassing federal legal and policy dominance in the ageing portfolio, there is limited source of power with which to legislate specifically with respect to elderly and aged care. Unlike Nigeria, Australia Age Care Act 1997, for instance, governs both residential care and home care, making provision for the commonwealth to provide financial support through payment of subsidies for the provision of aged care and payment of grants for the other matters connected with the provision of aged care via the introduction of the National Partnership Agreement on Transitioning Responsibility for Aged Care and Disability Services (Council of Australia Government, 2012), and the Living Longer, Living Better Program, which extended commonwealth funding of home and community care (now known as home care) support for elderly Australians and initiated program reform intended to provide improved service provision (Department of social services, 2013).

However, specifically, Division 54 Aged Care Act 1997 makes provision for determination of quality care and accommodation standards. Therefore, amongst the numerous principles made were: the quality of care principle; the users' Right principle; and the accountability principle were specific and of particular relevance. That is, the age care principle, together with the aged care determinations are legislative instrument in accordance with the legislative instrument Act 2003, thus the specifics 18 rights covering the independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity of the elderly with the approach to protect against abuse with legal and implementation involve cooperation with the state and territory Government (Lacey, 2014).

Therefore, the varying degrees, provided for the prevention of elder abuse through policies, practice guidelines, legislation frameworks, and different levels of coordinated interagency approach has to be in place to shun elder abuse in this part of the developing country especially in the focus area (Nigeria). In New South Wales, Tasmanian, Western Australia for example, the elders abuse policy frameworks are in active practice and guideline (Rae et al, 2016). There are establishment of organization and policies with guidelines for action in each as follows: in New South Wales-there is Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care established with policy of interagency protocol for responding to the abuse of older people 2007; and in Tasmanian-Department of Health and Human Services with the policy of responding to elder abuse with Tasmanian Government Practice Guidelines for Government and Non-Government Employees 2012; also in Western Australia, with Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, with policy of elder abuse protocol and guidelines for Africa 2013 respectively (Chesterman, 2015).

Now, various forms of elder abuse, to mention but few, constitute crimes under state and territory law, including offences such as assault, theft or obtaining elderly property by deception need to be treated under criminal justice. Hence, the primary goal of the criminal justice system is the prosecution of the perpetrators rather than the facilitation of remedy for the victim (Rae et al, 2016), this is important to reduce the potential abuser. Therefore also, National Financial Literacy Strategy has to establish an informed financial decision-making, with those financial decisions that are made at retirement and at old age.

In addition, in some country, specialist responses to suspected elder abuse are located within the primary health care service. In New Zealand for example, the approach to adult protection is one that situates the issues of elder abuse with a broader family violence framework, therefore has an office for senior citizens, and a minister for senior citizen, established in 1990 (Rae et al, 2016), with the responsibility for adult protective services located with the department of family and community services also with their responsibility to deliver the country range of family violence prevention programs. Thus, with the concerns to provide national training on elder abuse to professional in the family, primary health, and aged care sectors by the New Zealand Government.

To reduce the negative effects on elders, the legislative response is paramount. Hence, only few countries had enacted specific legislation on elder abuse (WHO, 2002), though there is changes over the year. To world health organization (WHO), laws in relation to elder abuse were the least commonly reported with the only about 40% of countries reporting having enacted laws to prevent elder abuse. That is, the abuse of older adult need to addressed through provisions in general criminal laws and law governing property rights and health.

Thus, some jurisdictions have provisions in their criminal law statutes that cover elder abuse, in New Zealand crime Act 1961 imposes a legal duty on the care of a vulnerable adult to take reasonable step to protect the person from injury. That is, a vulnerable adult is a person unable, by reason of detention, age, sickness, mental impairment, or other cause to withdraw himself or herself from the care or charges (Rae et al, 2016). Likewise, according to chapter 13 of the California penal code creates a number of elder abuse offences that can be prosecute as a felony or misdemeanor, with penalties of up to four years imprisonment on conviction.

This includes the offences of willful causing or permitting an elder or dependent adult to suffer unjustifiable physical pain or mental suffering and willfully causing or permitting another or dependent adult to be placed in a situation which his/her person or health is endangered. In view of this, the advocates of elder abuse seek to know and provide information about care recipients right and responsibility, listen to their concerns, assist in the resolution of issues or complaints raised in relation to aged, especially care service providers, then interface with these service providers and the care recipients may also refer to appropriate and relevant agencies (Department of Social Services, 2015).

In this other example that what is emulating in community (Nigeria) amongst other is Australia. Started from 2018, senior right Victoria has been funded by the Victorian Government to provide information, legal and advice, and short-term support and advocacy, also as referrals for those experiencing elder abuse in Victoria. Thus, its services are free and confidential helpline and online e-learning portal for professionals, and also to performing educative, policy and law reform roles. That is, its online elder abuse tool kit provides guidance about facilitating older people to make their own decisions, on how to work respectfully with older people, and how to enable them receive the service they needed (Rae et al, 2016), while other groups with informal alliances are essential to effective aged care advocacy and for monitoring the implementation and review of aged care service position.

Unlike Nigeria, other agencies in state (country) and territory specialize in providing information and advocacy services to prevent elder abuse. Some of them are: Aged and Disable Right Team, Tasmanian Elder Abuse Helpline and Advocacy Tasmania, the Aged Right Advocacy Service in South Australia, the Older Person Abuse Prevention Referral and Information Line and the New South Wales Aged Rights Service and the New South Wales Elder Abuse Helpline and Older Person Legal Services, the Queensland Seniors Legal and Support Service and the Queensland Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Advocate in Western Australia, Darwin community Center (Rae et al, 2016).

Other to learn from according to them, is cyberlink financial information service initiated via department of human services, and advisory services in connection with social security entitlement for seniors are also available in each state and territory, including Social Security Rights , Adelaide Welfare Right Center, Welfare Rights Center Brisbane, the Darwin and Hobart Community Legal Services, Welfare Rights Center Sydney, Social Security and Tenants Advice Line, Welfare Rights and Legal Center Act.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Take it or leave, in whatever way, elders care in society need to be among the major priority, since they were disengaged with the diminishing capacity to work and with the stage of several vulnerabilities (Judith 2014). This associated with the challenges such as health, financial, social, emotional or psychological that requires care and support range from individuals, communities and the government at large. Hence, the duty of functional government is to protect elders, including the right of every citizen regardless of age, race, gender, culture.

This study therefore recommends that, with the lessons from the above, if these protective measures are to emulates in Nigeria against the elder abuse, we must identify complexities associated with our current approaches, the shortcomings associated with legal avenues and policies responses, also with the current levels of coordinated interagency approaches to combat or reduce the increment of the problems in Nigeria. In this, its call for the introduction of comprehensive national approach to elder abuse and leadership to shown in these area as against the implication for national development in Nigeria. In addition, National Aged Care Advocacy Helpline must be made available in connection with the State or Territory-Based Advocacy Services. Thus, this is to promotes leadership through the introduction of elder abuse preventions and response units within state or territory departments, this with the practice orientation of preventing elder abuse with the duty toward changing the attitudes among the broader community and professionals and individuals whom interacts with elders, and mitigating the risk factors of the abuse. While each state has its own active laws implemented as at when due in relation to elder abuse and guidance, hence, Nigerian should learn from other developed country for the sustenance, care and support of the senior citizens. Therefore, the relevance of "government reciprocity policy" for effective social support systems in ensuring that elderly have adequate care and support as part and parcel of government despite their challenges of physiological retirement as a way of paying back for the sacrifices made in their active years is paramount. Therefore, the collaborative policies and efforts of both state, organizations, acts and every individual would have gone a long way in addressing elderly challenges in Nigeria.

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