Assessment of the influence of socio-economic status on the quality of life and activities of daily living among the elderly

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Abstract

The study aimed at examining the influence of socio-economic status of the elderly on their well-being. Using two indicators of well-being (AMS scale and ADL), we examine wealth index differentials on self-reported assessment of well-being among 974 elderly population in Nigeria. Activities of Daily Living (ADL) examine fourteen activities which they needed to do as part of their daily lives. The Aging Male Symptoms (AMS) instruments assessed self reported quality of life on a 17-variable scale to assess general well-being of the subjects. The data showed that decline in sexual feelings is more pronounced among males. Males also expressed the feelings of decline in productivity and the feelings that they have passed their peak.

Introduction

Aging is a period of intense health challenges. Health status in itself is associated and interrelated with some other issues. For instance, access to good and quality nutritional foods as well as good environmental conditions may enhance good health. Ojofeitimi et al, (2004) confirmed the essence of nutrition in health status of the elderly. Studies have also confirmed that quality of life in old age is associated with some socio-economic conditions provided by the care givers (Chen and Gavin, 1989). The extent to which the socio-economic status of the elderly relates to their health status has not been well research. This is the gap this current article attempt to explore. This paper is aimed at linking the extent to which the socio-economic status of the elderly contributes to their assessment of quality of life.

In this article, two indicators were used to investigate health status assessment of the elderly. The first is the Activities of Daily Living (ADL) scale and the second is the Aging Male Symptoms (AMS) scale. These two instruments have been conventionally found very reliable and valid in assessing the state of health of the elderly population. Activities of Daily Living (ADL) examine the activities which they needed to do as part of their daily lives. They were asked if they could do fourteen activities without any help, or with some help or they cannot do them at all. Respondents were asked about their self-assessment as well as the assessment of their spouse on the 14 items variables.

The Aging Male Symptoms scale (AMS) is purposely designed to measure Health Related Quality of Life HRQoL among elderly males. It was designed in Germany by Heinemann (1999) to assess self reported quality of life among the sampled elderly male population. The instrument was based on a 17-variable scale to assess general well-being

of the subjects. To each of the variable item, respondents were to rate their present situation as very low, low, moderate, high and very high. For this study, the AMS was translated into Yoruba and was adapted for both elderly males and females.

Methods

The data were gathered during a Nigerian survey of the elderly population (age range 60 to over 90 years), who spoke the Yoruba language and were ready to participate. The sample consisted of 456 elderly men and 491 elderly women. The study was a cross sectional survey covering three local government areas (LGAs) of Osun State in South-western Nigeria. A multi-stage systematic random sampling method was employed to select the respondents in the LGAs. Information was collected through the administration of questionnaires, using face-to-face interviews, on selected respondents.

Findings and Discussion:

The description of respondents by background characteristics of- age and education of the sampled population is presented in table1. The study population covered 947 elderly respondents in ages 60 years and above. More than 50 percent across both sexes were aged 70 years and above with slightly more than one out of every five as an octogenarian. About 70 percent among males and almost 96 percent among females had no education or a maximum of primary school educational level. Also, the data showed that males were substantially more educated than females as almost 30 percent among males, compared with only 3 percent among females completed secondary school or had a tertiary education. More than 3 out of every 5 respondents were in monogamous family type. About 42 percent of men compared with 54 percent of females were engaged in

productive activities within the last 12 months. Trading and farming activities formed the bulk of work reported with about 42 percent respondents.

According to the distribution in on the ADL scale, about 13 percent of the respondents as well as their spouses' were not able to get to walking distance. Almost one out of five of the respondents and 14 percent of the spouses were unable to go shopping in the market while about 15 percent of the respondents and 14 percent of the spouses needed some help to go to the market for shopping.

About 65 percent of the respondents (56% of males compared with 74% of females) reported that they could prepare their meal. More than 8 percent of the respondents were unable to eat by self, while 8 percent also needed some help to eat. Almost 20 percent of the sampled population was unable or needed some help to take their medications. More than 19 percent of the respondents were unable or needed some help to bath, while, 26 percent needed help or were unable to go to the toilet by themselves.

The findings from the AMS scale showed that more than 30 percent of the respondents reported high or very high feeling of general well-being (34% of males versus 29% of females). Almost two out of every five of the respondents reported at least high feelings of muscular pain. More than 86 percent reported between moderate and low excessive sweating. About four out of five reported moderate or low sleeping problem. About 30 percent reported at least high decrease in muscular strength, while more than 30 percent had high depressive mood. More than 20 percent of the respondents had a feeling of having passed their peak.

Generally, there is a decrease in sexual inclination among the elderly. Females reported low decline in sexual feelings. About 29 percent of males compared with 19 percent of females reported high decline in sexual performance. More than 25 percent of males compared with 16 percent of females reported high decrease in morning erection or sexual urge.

The data showed that decline in sexual feelings is more pronounced among males than females while females reported high decline in general activities than the males. Males also expressed the feelings of decline in productivity and the feelings that they have passed their peak than females.

Table .Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Assessment of Activities of Daily Living (ADL) by Gender

Activities of daily living	Male		Female		Both	
	Respondent (n=456)	Spouse[1] (n=342)	Respondent (n=491)	Spouse[2] (n=208)	Respondent (n=947)	Spouse[3] (n=550)
1. Get to places out of walking distance:						
• Not able	9.0	9.4	16.3	19.7	12.8	13.3
• Some help	16.9	7.9	9.4	10.6	13.0	8.9
• No help	74.1	82.8	74.3	69.7	74.2	77.8
2. Go shopping/to the market:						
• Not able	19.5	8.8	18.5	21.2	19.0	13.5
• Some help	20.8	13.7	9.2	13.5	14.8	13.6
• No help	59.7	77.5	72.3	65.4	66.2	72.9
3. Prepare your own meal:						
• Not able	20.4	8.8	17.7	22.6	19.0	14.0
• Some help	23.5	10.8	8.6	14.4	15.7	12.2
• No help	56.1	80.4	73.7	63.0	65.3	73.8
4. Eat on your own:						
• Not able	8.6	10.2	8.2	37.5	8.3	20.6
• Some help	8.3	4.1	6.7	7.7	7.5	5.5
• No help	83.1	85.7	85.1	54.8	84.2	74.0
5. Do your housework:						
• Not able	16.7	8.2	15.9	26.9	16.3	15.3
• Some help	16.7	7.9	11.0	19.7	13.7	12.4
• No help	66.7	83.9	73.1	53.4	70.0	72.4
6. Take medications by self:						
• Not able	13.2	9.4	10.4	29.3	11.7	16.9
• Some help	8.8	4.4	6.9	12.5	7.8	7.5
• No help	78.1	86.3	82.7	58.2	80.5	75.6
7. Handle your own money:						
• Not able	9.0	10.8	7.1	38.9	8.0	21.5
• Some help	7.7	4.1	7.7	7.7	7.7	5.5
• No help	83.3	85.1	85.1	53.4	84.3	73.1
8. Make contact when needed:						
• Not able	7.7	10.2	6.7	36.5	7.2	20.2
• Some help	7.5	3.8	6.1	8.2	6.8	5.5
• No help	84.9	86.0	87.2	55.3	86.1	74.4
9. Dress and undress yourself:						
• Not able	7.9	10.8	7.3	35.1	7.6	20.0
• Some help	10.1	3.5	7.7	11.1	8.9	5.5
• No help	82.0	85.7	84.9	53.9	83.5	74.4
10. Take care of your own appearance:						
• Not able	19.5	9.4	19.8	31.7	19.6	20.0
• Some help	11.2	7.9	9.2	15.4	10.1	6.4
• No help	69.3	82.8	71.1	52.9	70.2	73.6
11. Walk 2km:						
• Not able	17.1	8.5	15.9	30.8	16.5	17.8
• Some help	12.7	12.3	9.4	13.5	11.0	10.7
• No help	70.2	79.2	74.8	55.8	72.5	71.5
12. Get in and out of bed:						
• Not able	16.0	8.2	11.8	28.4	13.8	16.9
• Some help	5.9	6.1	6.9	15.4	6.4	12.7
• No help	78.1	85.7	81.3	56.3	79.7	70.4
13. Bath yourself						
• Not able	14.3	8.5	10.6	32.2	12.4	15.8
• Some help	7.9	6.1	6.9	11.1	7.4	9.6
• No help	77.9	85.4	82.5	56.7	80.3	74.6
14. Get to the toilet on time :						
• Not able	16.3	19.7	19.8	30.8	9.0	17.5
• Some help	9.4	10.6	9.2	13.5	16.9	8.0
• No help	74.3	69.7	71.1	55.8	74.1	74.6

[1] Excluding Male Widower
[2] Excluding Female Widow
[3] Excluding widows

Table 4.6.2: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Assessment of Quality of Life

Variable	Male (n=456)	Female (n=491)	Both (n=947)
1. Decline in your feeling of general well-being (general state of health, subjective feeling)			
• Very low	21.7	17.7	19.6
• low	19.7	18.5	19.1
• Moderate	25.0	35.0	30.2
• High	22.2	24.0	23.1
• Very high	11.4	4.7	7.9
2. Joint pain and muscular ache (lower back pain,joint pain, pain in a limb, general back ache):			
• Very low	20.4	16.7	18.5
• low	25.2	22.2	23.7
• Moderate	18.6	20.6	19.6
• High	24.8	31.6	28.3
• Very high	11.0	9.0	9.9
3. Excessive sweating (unexpected/sudden episodes of sweating, hot flushes independent of strain):			
• Very low	32.7	22.2	27.2
• low	24.6	41.6	33.4
• Moderate	32.9	17.7	25.0
• High	7.9	16.9	12.6
• Very high	2.0	1.6	1.8
4. Sleep problems (difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in sleeping through, waking up early and feeling tired, poor sleep, sleeplessness):			
• Very low	35.8	29.9	32.7
• low	20.2	29.5	25.0
• Moderate	30.0	21.2	25.5
• High	11.0	7.7	9.3
• Very high	3.1	11.6	7.5
5. Increased need for sleep, often feeling tired			
• Very low	32.9	26.7	29.7
• low	41.2	33.8	37.4
• Moderate	15.1	21.8	18.6
• High	8.8	6.5	7.6
• Very high	2.0	11.2	6.8
6. Irritability (feeling aggressive, easily upset about little things, moody):			
• Very low	33.8	29.5	31.6
• low	36.0	38.5	37.3
• Moderate	25.0	17.5	21.1
• High	3.7	3.9	3.8
• Very high	1.5	10.6	6.2
7. Nervousness (inner tension, restlessness, feeling fidgety):			
• Very low	31.6	26.3	28.8
• low	29.6	39.7	34.9
• Moderate	17.1	13.9	15.4
• High	20.2	18.7	19.4
• Very high	1.5	1.4	1.5
8. Anxiety (feeling panicky):			
• Very low	30.5	23.2	26.7
• low	31.4	32.8	32.1
• Moderate	13.2	15.1	14.2
• High	18.9	26.3	22.7
• Very high	6.1	2.7	4.3
9. Physical exhaustion / lacking vitality (general decrease in performance, reduced activity, lacking interest in leisure activities):			
• Very low	22.8	20.2	21.4
• low	38.2	36.9	37.5
• Moderate	19.5	23.6	21.7
• High	16.2	9.4	12.7
• Very high	3.3	10.0	6.8
10. Decrease in muscular strength (feeling of weakness):			
• Very low	19.1	18.1	18.6
• low	36.0	32.0	33.9

• Moderate	15.1	21.2	18.3
• High	18.0	25.1	21.7
• Very high	11.8	3.7	7.6
11. Depressive mood (feeling down, sad, on the verge of tears, lack of drive, mood swings, feeling nothing is of any use):	20.4	17.9	19.1
• Very low	30.7	28.9	29.8
• low	18.4	22.0	20.3
• Moderate	24.3	27.7	26.1
• High	6.1	3.5	4.8
• Very high			
12. Feeling that you have passed your peak:			
• Very low	25.7	20.2	22.8
• low	27.2	26.1	26.6
• Moderate	20.2	28.1	24.3
• High	21.9	14.9	18.3
• Very high	5.0	10.8	8.0
13. Feeling burnt out, having hit rock-bottom:			
• Very low	28.3	21.4	24.7
• low	31.6	35.4	33.6
• Moderate	16.7	22.0	19.4
• High	18.9	9.0	13.7
• Very high	4.6	12.2	8.6
14. Decrease in beard growth:			
• Very low	29.8	26.3	28.0
• low	25.4	31.8	28.7
• Moderate	19.1	21.0	20.1
• High	19.3	13.4	16.3
• Very high	6.4	7.5	7.0
15. Decrease in ability/frequency to perform sexually:			
• Very low	33.3	44.8	39.3
• low	20.6	21.4	21.0
• Moderate	17.3	14.7	16.0
• High	18.4	7.7	12.9
• Very high	10.3	11.4	10.9
16. Decrease in the number of morning erections/sexual urge (for male):			
• Very low	44.7	75.8	60.8
• low	19.1	10.0	14.4
• Moderate	10.1	4.9	7.4
• High	16.7	4.9	10.6
• Very high	9.4	4.5	6.9
17. Decrease in sexual desire/libido (lacking pleasure in sex, lacking desire for sexual intercourse):			
• Very low	43.6	52.1	48.1
• low	12.9	11.2	12.0
• Moderate	16.9	20.6	18.8
• High	16.7	11.6	14.0
• Very high	9.9	4.5	7.1

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