AGEING IN PLACE: EXPLORING THE HOUSING SITUATIONS OF THE ELDERLY IN TRADITIONAL AND TRANSITIONAL AREAS IN OYO TOWN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study explored the housing situations of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town towards enhancing ageing in place. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to choose one (1) traditional area and one (1) transitional area while snowballing was used to select 60 elderly and their houses in each of the chosen areas of study. A structured questionnaire and an observation checklist adopted from the standardized Housing Enabler Instrument were utilised to obtain data for the study. All 120 copies of the questionnaire forms and observation checklists administered were retrieved and analysed using frequency distribution, percentage, sum score and cross-tabulation. Results showed that a majority of the elderly in the traditional and transitional areas have not spent more than 20 years in their current house. Also, the majority of the elderly live with their families and own their houses. The elderly in the traditional area predominantly live in rooming apartments while those in the transitional area predominantly live in blocks of flats. Significantly, the houses of the elderly possess poor physical characteristics unfavourable to ageing in place, although, more of these poor characteristics were found in the traditional area. The study recommends that to promote ageing in place, housing interventions should take into account the varied situations of the elderly in different contexts and settings. Also, to successfully age in place, the elderly should be encouraged to live with family members, the elderly should be supported to own a house, and poor physical housing characteristics should be eliminated, or reduced to the barest minimum.

Keywords: Ageing in place, Elderly, Housing situations, Traditional, Transitional areas.

INTRODUCTION

Ageing of population (also known as demographic ageing or population ageing) is a summary term for shifts in the age distribution (age structure) of a population toward older ages. This happens because of rising life expectancy or declining birth rates (Orire, 2015). Ageing is also defined as a process in which older persons become a proportionally larger share of the total population (National Population Commission NPC, 2003). Ageing is both a natural and universal process; it is essentially a cultural category; hence, its meaning and significance vary both historically and culturally (Adeleke, 2014).

Ageing is a multifaceted concept whose in-depth description or explanation covers diverse areas of human development. There are chronological, biological, psychological, social and functional dimensions of ageing. The chronological dimension describes the number of years that have slipped away since one's birth while the biological dimension describes the status of vital organs of the body as an individual advances in age. The psychological dimension focuses on the individual ability to adapt to environmental demands/challenges while the social dimension sheds light on how an individual conforms to written/unwritten norms and roles expected of him/her by the society in which he/she operates. The functional dimension measures how effective an individual is in the physical and social environment when compared with other people within his/her age bracket (Gesinde, Adekeye & Iruonagbe, 2011).

Generally, global trends show a rapid population growth of persons 60 years and over. Between 2015 and 2030, the number of people in the world aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 56 percent, from 901 million to 1.4 billion, and by 2050. The global population of older persons is projected to more than double its size in 2015, reaching nearly 2.1 billion. (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2015). Thus, population ageing appears enduring and aggressive. The concept of ageing permeates every fabric of society including housing. In the field of housing, the term 'ageing in place' is relevant. Ageing in place is defined as the "ability to live in one's home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level" (Fonseca, 2020). This suggests the permanency of people's housing while they experience changes over their lifetime (Hwang, Cummings, Sixsmith and Sixsmith, 2011). Also, ageing in place refers to people getting older in their proverbial "home". It involves the physical environment of the residence, the surrounding neighbourhood and the broader community–including geographic and social affiliations (Black, 2008).

The common idea regarding ageing in place is that continuity in the environmental experience of the person is beneficial to his or her quality of life and independence. More so, even when older people experienced problems with physical and cognitive functional declines, housing was identified as the most desirable setting to receive personal care assistance and behaviour monitoring (American Association of Retired Persons, 2000). Also, supporting people to continue to live in their own homes is generally less expensive than options such as residential care (Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008).

Living in the house is a desirable and important objective for elderly persons because of the physical, psychological and psychosocial benefits associated with independence and autonomy (Braubach & Power, 2011). The elderly as defined by NPC (2003) are persons aged 60 years and above. Although many elders wish to live in their houses for as long as possible, the infrastructure needed to support this choice is often inadequate (Sulaiman, Baldry & Ruddock, 2006). Dwyer, Gray and Renwick (2000) pointed out the social, economic and service requirements if people are to age positively 'in place' and noted that living independently does not simply mean living at home. It implies access to services and resources which ensure a good quality of life despite age-related illness or disability.

Also, the success of older owner-occupiers remaining at home may depend on their ability to have their houses modified, adapted or maintained to keep them in good condition and able to fulfil their needs. This is so as most housing has not been designed with older age and impairment in mind and the arrangements of the home environment often inhibit the ability of

a person to manage their daily life (Davey, De Joux, Nana & Arcus, 2004). Hence, deficiencies in the housing environment have a significant effect on elderly dependency on support agencies. Thus, an important aspect of ageing in place is the ability of older people to make modifications and repairs to their homes so they can remain living there safely (Heywood, Oldman & Means, 2002). However, since the experiences of the elderly are specific and widely varied (Mohd Aini, Murni & Wan Abd Aziz, 2016), exploring the housing situations of the elderly in different contexts and settings is pertinent.

Statement of the Research Problem

Nigeria and the world at large are experiencing a rapid increase in the size of the ageing population. Nigeria has the largest number of elderly people south of the Sahara, over the age of 60 years (Mudiare, 2013). The elderly population which was approximately 4.6 million in the 1991 census grew to 7 million (approx.) in 2006 representing about a 52 percent increase over a period of 15 years. It is projected that this population will reach 16 million by 2030 and 47 million by the year 2060; thus, the challenge as a nation will be to understand the dynamics of ageing, to anticipate the changing needs of the elderly, and to strengthen social institutions and national capacities to address them (NPC, 2003; NPC, 2009).

The ageing process is characterised by so many physiological, mental and psychological changes like the elderly making them vulnerable as they experience this stage of their life (Gesinde et al., 2011). Coupled with these natural changes are the various economically and socially challenging life situations that the elderly find themselves in their various societies which further compound their weak state of living (Mudiare, 2013; Shofoyeke & Amosun, 2014). During the ageing process, the house and by extension, its neighbourhood is of greatest importance to the elderly because it is the abode where the elderly spend most of their time (Diaz & Roberts, 2007; Shelter, 2007). Also, the house provides shelter for engaging in the day to day living activities; therefore it exerts the greatest impact on the elderly life as a whole.

Housing is universally acknowledged as one human need which has profound impacts on the health, welfare, lifestyle, social attitude, happiness and productivity of individuals (David, 2011); and must be provided both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative dimension of housing relates to providing adequate numbers and sizes of housing units, spaces and parts. However, for housing to produce positive impacts, it is acknowledged it must be adequately provided with functional infrastructure (Olujimi, 2010); emphasising its qualitative dimension. The quality of housing is largely hinged on the nature of various housing characteristics which may be physical, socio-cultural or economical; thus, a good and balanced mix of all these characteristics is essential (United Nations [UN], 2003).

In Nigeria, most elderly are accommodated in general housing (NPC, 2003; NPC, 2009). General housing comprises dwellings (houses and apartments), either owned or rented by older individuals or a member of their household, in which the older household members reside either independently, or with family and/or others, and thus "age in place" (Ferreira, 2013). The situation applies to Oyo town, as a pilot survey revealed it. However, studies have found that general housing possess poor characteristics which are unfavourable for the elderly ageing in place (Asiyanbola, 2008; Braubach & Power, 2011; Anning, 2012; Rantakokko, Törmäkangas, Rantanen, Haak & Iwarsson, 2013; Kylén, Ekström, Haak, Elmståhl & Iwarsson, 2014; Shofoyeke & Amosun, 2014), those that have compared the situations of the elderly in different contexts/settings especially in Nigeria rarely exist. It is believed that these contexts/settings will

give more insight into understanding the diversity of experiences encountered by the elderly while ageing in place.

Of the existing context/settings for studying the housing situations of the elderly, the rural-urban location may be relevant. Wahl and Oswald (2010) noted that the comprehension of the effect of modernity and urban globalisation on the elderly may be enhanced by the rural-urban distinction. Also, it is considered that the rural-urban distinction may affect the housing situations of the elderly. This may be reliably deduced from the work of Mohd Aini et al. (2016) who validly established differences in the housing aspirations of the elderly in urban and rural areas in Malaysia; thus providing a strong basis for studying housing of the elderly in differing settings.

Therefore, given the implications of housing characteristics for ageing in place and variations in contexts/settings, it is expedient that a study of the housing situations of the elderly in a rural-urban setting or similar context within Nigeria is undertaken; hence the study. This is necessary as the country hopes to intensify efforts in tackling the housing challenges of this vulnerable group of society.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims to explore the housing situations of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town towards enhancing the phenomenon of ageing in place.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

 i. Compare the socioeconomic characteristics of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town; and
 ii. Compare the housing characteristics of the elderly in the study areas.

Research Questions

Based on the above stated objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised:

 i. What are the socioeconomic characteristics of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town?
 ii. What are the housing characteristics of the elderly in the study areas?

The Study Area

Oyo is situated within Oyo State in the southwestern part of Nigeria. It has an area of 937 mile², an altitude of 304m and lies along latitude 7.850° north of the equator and longitude 3.933° east of the Greenwich Meridian. Oyo is bounded by Ibadan on the south, by Iseyin on the west and by Ogbomoso on the east ("City", 2019). Oyo is a partially urbanised medium city (Jiboye & Ogunshakin, 2010); and constitutes villages, traditional and transitional areas. The people of Oyo are predominantly Christians, Muslims and traditional worshipers. Also, the predominant occupation in Oyo is trading, farming and civil/public service.

For this study, Ashipa was selected to represent the traditional area and Isokun was chosen to represent the transitional area (see Figure 1). The choice of these areas was due to proximity and the ease of accessing the elderly residing within these localities. Also, the selected areas exhibit most of the characteristics which are relevant to the study. In addition, research assistants that were secured for the study are firmly rooted in these areas.
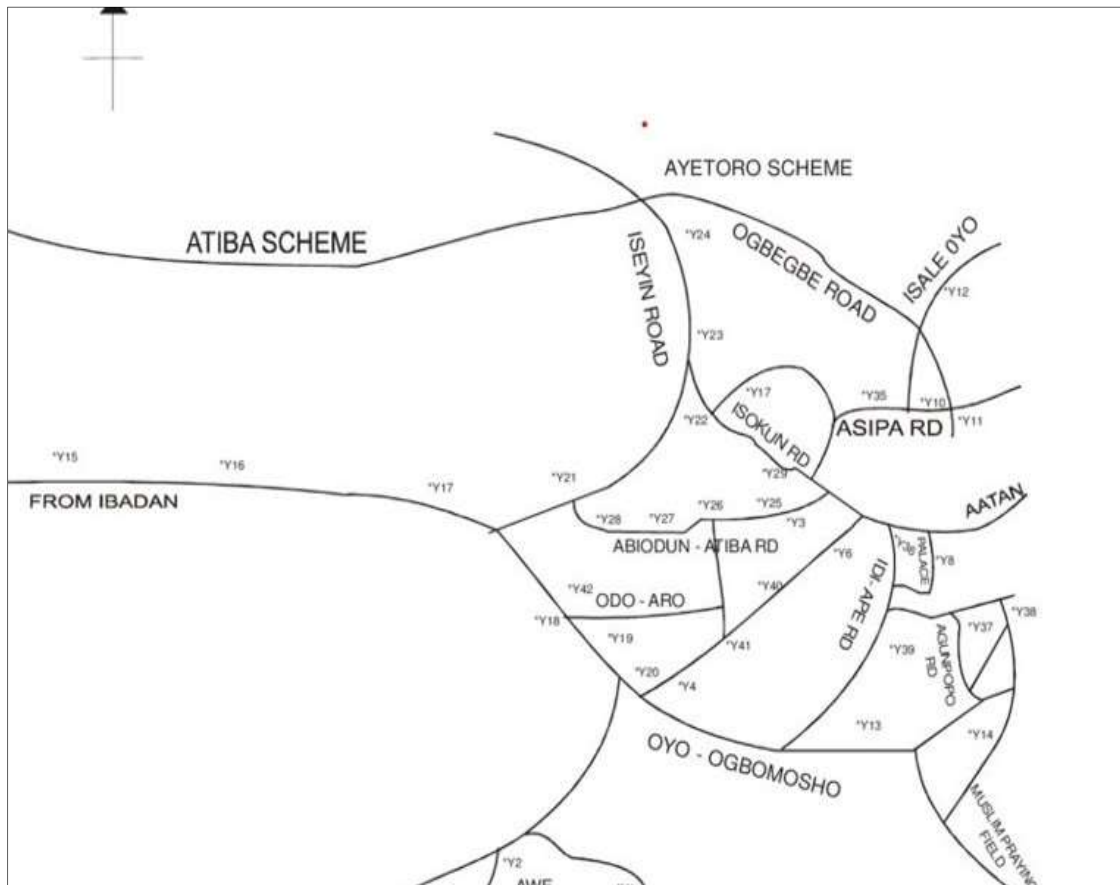

Figure 1: Map of Oyo town showing localities
Source: Field study (2024)

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. The primary source of data collection was through observation and administration of a structured questionnaire.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The study population comprised the elderly and the houses the Elderly live in Ashipa and Isokun. It is observed that data on the population of the elderly and the houses they live in within the study locations is non-existent as confirmed by the NPC office, Atiba and Oyo West

Local Government Areas (LGAs), after several efforts made to access such data was unsuccessful. Therefore, an adequate number of elderly above the minimum recommended sample size for a comparative study was purposively sampled. To this end, a total number of 120 elderly (60 traditional and 60 transitional) and the houses they live in were selected using the snowballing technique. Also, in situations where more than one elderly reside in a house, only one elderly was chosen to study.

Data Collection Instruments and Administration

A structured questionnaire and a standardised version of the Housing Enabler (HE) instrument were adopted for the study. The questionnaire assessed the socioeconomic characteristics and part of the housing characteristics of the respondents. It contained variables such as age, sex, marital status, educational level, occupation, average monthly income, years spent in current house, living arrangement, house tenure status and house type. These variables were measured at both nominal and ordinal levels based on the characteristics of the variables. The questionnaire was face and content validated by experts in the field of housing and urban studies. Also, the HE instrument was used to identify poor physical housing characteristics in the houses where the elderly live in the form of indoor barriers. The HE instrument had been empirically validated and proven to be reliable by Carlsson et al. (2009).

In administering the data collection instruments, 2 research assistants (1 for the traditional area and 1 for the transitional area) were employed. This helped in easily locating target respondents and assisted in securing their consent to be used for the study. So, in each area, the elderly and the houses they live in were visited and assessed; and sampling continued till the desired size was reached. In sum, 120 copies (60 traditional and 60 transitional) of the structured questionnaire and 120 copies (60 traditional and 60 transitional) of the Housing Enabler (HE) instrument were administered. All (100%) of the administered instruments were retrieved for onward analysis.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using statistical techniques such as frequency distribution, percentage, sum score and cross tabulation. The analysis was carried out with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: *What are the socioeconomic characteristics of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town?*

Findings, as shown in Table 1, revealed that Thirty-Eight percent (approx.) of the elderly in the traditional area fell within the age group of 60-64 years, followed by those within the age groups of 65-69 years (35.0%), 70-74 years (20.0%) and 75-79 years (6.7%). While in the transitional area, Sixty-Eight percent (approx.) of the elderly fell within the age group of 60-64 years, followed by those within the age groups of 65-69 years (15.0%), 70-74 years (11.7%) and 75-79 years (5.0%). The age pattern in both areas showed the same trend with the population of the elderly decreasing along with increasing age groups. Similar age patterns were found by Anning (2012) and Iwarri, Akpan and Usoroh (2016). Also, Table 1 indicated that most of the respondents in the traditional area are males (68.3%) and married (81.7%), and similarly, most

in the transitional area are males (66.7%) and married (83.3%). The majority of the elderly being married is a good indication of not being isolated and ensures easy access to family care which is essential for ageing in place.

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of the Elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town

Socioeconomic Characteristics		Traditional Area		Transitional Area	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Age (years)	60-64	23	38.3	41	68.3
	65-69	21	35.0	09	15.0
	70-74	12	20.0	07	11.7
	75-79	04	06.7	03	05.0
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Sex	Male	41	68.3	40	66.7
	Female	19	31.7	20	33.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Marital status	Never married	03	05.0	04	06.7
	Married	49	81.7	50	83.3
	Separated	02	03.3	01	01.7
	Divorced	02	03.3	00	00.0
	Widowed	04	06.7	05	08.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Highest Educational level	No schooling	15	25.0	01	01.7
	Primary School	09	15.0	03	05.0
	Junior secondary school	03	05.0	02	03.3
	Senior Secondary School/ Technical College	15	25.0	08	13.3
	Tertiary education	15	25.0	44	73.4
	Others	03	05.0	02	03.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Occupation	No job	02	03.3	00	00.0
	Farming	21	35.0	01	01.7
	Trading	18	30.0	19	31.7
	Pensioner in Civil/Public service	17	28.4	38	63.3
	Others	02	03.3	02	03.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Average monthly income (₦)	<18,000	17	28.3	05	08.3
	18,000-30,000	19	31.7	08	13.3
	31,000-50,000	17	28.4	19	31.7
	51,000-100,000	05	08.3	17	28.4
	100,000+	02	03.3	11	18.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Regarding the level of education, Table 1 revealed most (73.4%) of the elderly in the transitional area had studied up to tertiary education as against few (25.0%) who have achieved such feat in the traditional area. This indicates that the elderly in the transitional area are highly learned and have more opportunities to secure jobs in civil/public service than those in the traditional area. Furthermore, Thirty-Five percent, Thirty percent and Twenty-Eight percent (approx.) of respondents in the traditional area are engaged in farming, and trading and are

pensioners in civil/public service respectively, while Thirty-Two percent (approx.) and Sixty-Three percent (approx.) of respondents in the transitional area are engaged in trading and are pensioners in civil/public service respectively. This result contradicts the findings of Iwarri et al. (2016) and indicates most of the elderly are involved in one form of employment. Also, most of the elderly in the traditional area (72% approx.) and transitional area (92% approx.) earn ₦18,000.00 and above every month. This is expected since the vast majority of the elderly have a viable means of generating income. This also suggests most respondents can financially care for themselves and can independently support their housing needs and wants while ageing in place.

Research Question 2: *What are the housing characteristics of the elderly in traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town?*

Table 2 revealed many (46.7%) of the elderly in the traditional area have lived in their present house for up to 20 years, followed by 21 - 40 years with 36.7% and 41 - 60 years with 13.3%. A very small percentage (3.3%) has spent between 61 - 80 years in their present house. Contrastingly, most (88.3%) of the elderly in the transitional area have spent up to 20 years in their present house, followed by 21 - 40 years with 11.7%. This suggests majority of the elderly in both traditional and transitional areas have recently relocated into their present houses and have therefore not aged in place. Also, Table 2 further revealed that most of the elderly in the traditional area (86.7%) and the transitional area (93.4%) live with their families. This indicates that living with family is the preferred form of living arrangement amongst the elderly irrespective of the location, and such living arrangement helps guarantee easy access to family support which is beneficial to ageing in place.

Table 2: Housing characteristics of the Elderly in the study areas

Housing Characteristics		Traditional Area		Transitional Area	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Duration in the current house	01-20	28	46.7	53	88.3
	21-40	22	36.7	07	11.7
	41-60	08	13.3	00	00.0
	61-80	02	03.3	00	00.0
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Living arrangement	Alone	08	13.3	02	03.3
	With family	52	86.7	56	93.4
	With non-family	00	00.0	02	03.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
House tenure status	Owner	46	76.7	55	91.7
	Renter	11	18.3	03	05.0
	Occupier	03	05.0	02	03.3
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
House type	Rooming apartment	30	50.0	05	08.3
	Block of flats	17	28.4	33	55.0
	Detached bungalow	09	15.0	16	26.7
	Semidetached bungalow	02	03.3	02	03.3
	Duplex apartment	02	03.3	03	05.0
	Others	00	00.0	01	01.7
	Total	60	100.0	60	100.0

Indoor barriers	N	% of cases	N	% of cases
1. Step(s) differences in level between rooms/lobbies (more than 15cm)	29	48.3	21	35.0
2. Narrow door(s) (less than 75cm clearance) in rooms	22	36.7	16	26.7
3. Uneven floor surface(s) in rooms/lobbies	15	25.0	16	26.7
4. Slippery floor surface in rooms/lobbies	31	51.7	16	26.7
5. Insufficient manoeuvring spaces around storage units (service area less than 0.9m in front) in the kitchen	30	50.0	23	38.3
6. No fixture surface(s) at a height suitable for sitting while working in the kitchen	26	43.3	19	31.7
7. Insufficient space for stool or bathboard in bathroom and/ or toilet	25	41.7	22	36.7
8. No grab bar in the bathroom and/or toilet	25	41.7	30	50.0
9. Wash basin at a height for use only when standing (top edge 90cm or more above floor) in bathroom and/or toilet	28	46.7	35	58.3
10. Toilet 45cm or lower	60	100.0	60	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Furthermore, results in Table 2 (see Page 12) showed a large majority of the elderly in the traditional area (76.7%) and transitional area (91.7%) own their houses. However, more of the elderly tend to rent houses in the traditional area (18.3%) compared to their counterparts in the transitional area (5.0%). This result indicates owning a house to be a favoured choice of the various forms of house tenancy amongst the elderly irrespective of the location. This corroborates the findings of Asiyanbola (2008) who found the majority of the elderly in Ibadan owning their houses and supports the works of Mohd Aini et al. (2016) who also found the majority of the elderly owning or co-owning their houses in both urban and rural areas in Malaysia, but contradicts the findings of Anning (2012) who found the contrary in Ashanti region, Ghana. Also, the preponderance of house ownership amongst the elderly is advantageous to the phenomenon of ageing in place; since such houses could conveniently be occupied by the elderly without fear of eviction till death overtakes them.

In terms of house type, Table 2 revealed that in the traditional area, the percentage of elderly living in rooming apartments is 50.0%, block of flats is 28.4%, detached bungalows are 15.0%, semi-detached bungalow is 3.3% and duplex apartment is 3.3%. In the transitional area, the percentage of elderly living in a rooming apartment is 8.3%, block of flats is 55.0%, detached bungalows are 26.7%, semi-detached bungalow is 3.3% and the duplex apartment is 5.0%. Most of the elderly in both the traditional area (78.4%) and the transitional area (63.3%) live in multi-family dwellings such as rooming apartments and blocks of flats. A similar finding though with an average percentage of 52.9% was found by Asiyanbola (2008). Such is expected especially given that most of the elderly in both areas had earlier been found to live with their families

(which may include both nuclear and extended families) and thus require multi-family accommodations. Also, it is observed that multi-family dwellings especially blocks of flats in the transitional area are being increasingly favoured to afford rent opportunities where families are not accommodated therein. However, Table 2 further revealed that more rooming apartments were found in the traditional area (50.0%) compared to the transitional area (8.3%), also, more blocks of flats and detached bungalows were found in the transitional area (55.0% and 26.7% respectively) compared to the traditional area (28.4% and 15.0% respectively). This followed the pattern of house type characteristic of the areas which may depend on differing residential densities, with the traditional area possessing higher density than the transitional area.

Also, Table 2 recorded various poor physical housing characteristics present in the houses the elderly live in the form of indoor barriers. Substantially, in the traditional area, more than forty percent of the houses the elderly live in possessed 8 out of 10 barriers compared to the transitional area, where a similar percentage possessed 3 out of 10 barriers examined. This indicates that the houses of the elderly in the traditional area have more poor physical housing characteristics than those in the traditional area. This result also contributes to the evidence that has found housing constituting disadvantageous environments for the elderly which are unfavourable to ageing in place (Asiyanbola, 2008; Braubach & Power, 2011; Anning, 2012; Rantakokko et al., 2013; Kylén et al., 2014; Shofoyeke & Amosun, 2014).

However, in both traditional and transitional areas, findings in Table 2 revealed that more of the barriers were found in the hygiene areas including the bathroom and toilet. Similar findings have been recorded by Kylén et al. (2014). This suggests that hygiene areas constitute the most detrimental spaces in the houses of the elderly. This corroborates a related finding made by Mohd Aini et al. (2016) wherein the elderly study indicated that the bathroom in their current house is unsafe. Furthermore, Table 2 shows that the most predominant barrier in the houses of the elderly in both traditional and transitional areas is the toilet at 45cm height or lower. Regarding this, Anning (2012), after observing in the houses of the elderly the prevalent presence of toilet facilities fitting into the above-stated description, noted that such toilet facility forces the elderly to squat and it affects and worsens their health situation due to the knee and joint pains they suffer from. Also, next to the toilet at 45cm height or lower (N = 60), slippery floor surface in rooms/lobbies (N = 31) and wash basin at a height for use only when standing in the bathroom and/or toilet constitute the prevalent barriers in the traditional area and transitional area respectively.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the socioeconomic and housing characteristics of the elderly in the traditional and transitional areas in Oyo town are varied, and have different implications for ageing in place. Although there are similarities in patterns of some socioeconomic and housing dimensions such as age, sex, marital status, living arrangement and house tenure status, they exist to different degrees. Also, the houses of the elderly were found to constitute various disadvantageous environments which are unfavourable to ageing in place, although, the traditional area possessed more poor physical housing characteristics than the transitional area. However, given the benefits of ageing in place for the elderly, housing interventions should

duly consider the varied housing situations in different settings to provide appropriate solutions peculiar to such settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

i. The elderly should be encouraged and assisted to live with family members to afford easy access to necessary support during the ageing process.

ii. The elderly should be given necessary financial support to own a house which helps to secure a legal right to a place for living perpetually during the ageing experience.

iii. General housing should be constructed devoid of poor physical characteristics detrimental to the living of the elderly towards ensuring a successful ageing in place.

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