

A Case study on the experiences of Nigerian Women of inequality, disadvantages, discrimination and barriers to accessing services.

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An intersectional case study on the experiences of groups susceptible to inequality, disadvantages, discrimination and barriers to accessing services was carried out with Nigerian women living in London. The focus was on the elderly and was conducted under the umbrella of the Nigerian Organisation of Women, UK. A questionnaire-type survey was used. The percentage response was 55% and this high response was attributed to the monetary incentive. Several conclusions can be drawn from the studies; the major barriers to accessibility and inclusion appear to be rooted in culture and ignorance. The women have a cultural tendency to be more private and hence less inclined to seek any support that would require the divulging of personal information. They need to overcome the mindset that the services are 'favours' and that they will return to Africa when they are old, they are not prepared. Other barriers cited are not knowing what is available and needing support to access services. The consensus for improvement included needing a friend 'social buddy' to go with, mobility support, day centres and activity centres. The organisation has tried to address some of these issues through regular meetings and creation of a family tree structure in which the family tree is charged with the welfare of its members. The challenges faced remain recruitment of volunteers and paid staff to provide regular support.

INTRODUCTION

The aims of this case study are to:

- consider the various types of support and care services available for the elderly and infirm
- to consider barriers and challenges faced when trying to access services
- show how and why care and support are inaccessible to the group
- suggest the ways forward

The study was carried out under the umbrella of the Nigerian Organisation of Women (NOW); Nigeria Organisation of Women (NOW) was formed in 1984 to provide a social forum for Nigerian women of all ages, faith, sexuality and marital status. The aims are to:

- cater for the general wellbeing of Nigerian women who can come together and seek their common good by supporting and showing concern for one another's mutual interests.
- provide a forum whereby all Nigerian Women can come together and seek their common good by supporting and showing concern for one another's mutual interests.
- encourage Nigerian women to come forward with their wealth of talents, culture, knowledge and training and project themselves to their local Community.

The group is essentially made up of elderly women and the average age is about 75 years. Many of these women are lone, widowed, separated or divorced. Their children are somewhat middle aged (40-50 years), thus these women need support from the community and in many instances are unable to access the appropriate support. The group members are conservative, proud and somewhat inhibited.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted through a questionnaire type survey using three methods:

- one to one interview
- face to face group discussion
- general survey

In all cases, the questionnaire was explained and participants completed the questionnaires as individuals. 30 questionnaires were given out in a stamped self addressed envelope. 10 questionnaires were sent via email. Ethical issues were considered; consent was sought and anonymity was maintained where requested.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections;

- (A) general information (personal information)
- (B) community and other services
- (C) accessibility of the services
- (D) barriers to accessibility and inclusion
- (E) additional information (suggestion for improvement of accessibility and inclusion).

About 50 questions were posed with about 180 possible answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The percentage response was 55%; the high level of response was attributable to the monetary incentive. The women were promised a remuneration of £25 for

participation. The outcomes are discussed under the sections above and graphs and tables are used for illustration. It can be seen that the participants are aware of most services but do not use them because they are not interested and do not know how to access them. In the group discussion, it was said that one of the barriers was the mind-set that the services are 'favours'. The group need to overcome this, since they have worked and contributed to the economy through tax and national insurance contributions. They are not conscious of how they have paid.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results several conclusions can be drawn.

Majority of the participants are over 60 years old, single, living alone, weak and have fair to strong family support. Majority of them have lived in London for over 30 years. The major fears were:

- (a) frailty or mobility issues, e.g. associated with risk of falls or medical conditions.
- (b) vulnerable because living on their own.

In the light of the above, provision of a 'lending' hand will be a way forward. Workshops on how to access the various services would also help. They

- need to overcome the mindset that the services are 'favours'.
- need to overcome the mindset that they will return to Africa when they are old, they are not prepared.
- stick together, make your old age better.
- overcome ignorance
- reclaim oneself.

Thus the organisation faces the challenges of recruiting more volunteers or paid staff to provide regular support for members and others. Again is down to costs; time and money. The group is quite poor, majority has an income below £30,000.

The full report from this research is comprehensive and this document contains a summary. If you would like information about the full questionnaires used, information sheets provided to respondents, or tables and graphs, please in the first instance contact the HEAR Coordinator:

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