Controversies in preparing for end-of-life in Nsukka town, Nigeria and suggestions for Nigerian-based social work practice

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Abstract: Death is regarded as a natural phenomenon of life but sometimes perceived to be bitter, especially for the bereaved. End-of-life plans could cushion the bitter experiences for the bereaved, as they can leverage on the plans made by the dead to better their lives. Unfortunately, the practice of making plans for end-of-life seems poor in Nigeria and has led to several controversies. In this study, we examined the perceptions of adults toward end-of-life planning in one of Nigeria's Igbo area, using a cross-sectional survey. Data was collected from 587 adults and also analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools. Age, level of education, marital status and sex were shown to have statistically significant relationships with attitude toward end-of-life planning, while cultural beliefs were discovered to also exercise overbearing influence. The study further discovered some cultural practices that deter people from planning for end-of-life and therefore advocates for social protection and reorientation which should principally involve social workers. Suggestions supported introducing end-of-life planning education into the curriculum of secondary and tertiary schools in Nigeria. This would serve as a proactive measure to help reform attitudes of persons toward preparing for end-of-life in the future.

Keywords : End-of-life planning, Death, Attitude, Social Work.

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Introduction

The experience of death is often associated with bitter feelings for immediate family members. In Nigeria, the usually sad event occurs at an annual rate of 14.33 per 1000 persons (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010; National Population Commission, 2014; World Bank, 2012; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2013). While it is an experience faced by everyone regardless of age, a number of factors such as illnesses, epidemics, malnutrition, inefficiencies of health systems, accidents, among others, could be attributed as causes (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Kramer, Boelk & Auer, 2006; U.S National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2010). Apart from old age, most of these causes are not compulsorily time bound for people, thereby making it difficult to know when death will occur for each individual and when to commence end-of-life planning (EoLP).

To some persons, EoLP becomes important at the failure of medical attention and expertise to address any health challenge. Thus, they believe that end-of-life plans only become necessary when death is imminent (Jeanne & Michael, 2010). On the contrary, Okafor (2009) maintains that death can occur as early as the first day one is born, therefore EoLP should begin as soon as one is able to do so. However, it is argued that EoLP is necessary only if an individual has acquired properties that could be inherited, a knowledge that could be shared or information that could help those he/she would be leaving behind, in the eventuality of his/her demise (Onukwugha, 2008).

Against the backdrop, this study is limited to investigating other constituents of EoLP such as advanced directives, will or trust documents to pass on properties, funeral or burial plans and choice of next of kin (Bowman & Singer, 2001; Candib, 2002; Kagawa-Singer & Blackhall, 2001; Social Care Institute for Excellence [SCIE], 2009). These highlighted constituents are revealed in Agbawodikeizu, Agwu, Okoye and Oyeoku (2018) as comprising EoLP among Nigerians. Their study equally revealed gross dearth and poor acceptance of palliative care among Nigerians. However, investigating palliative care practices falls out of the study's scope, owing to its vast nature and poor practice in the area of study (Agbawodikeizu et al, 2018; Onyeka, 2011). Regardless of the absence of palliative care in Nigeria, the above-mentioned constituents still suffer some setbacks which are mostly cultural. This is reinforced by the rationale that EoLP at a time when death is not in view seems like pleading to die (Agbawodikeizu et al, 2018).

In Igbo societies, properties are inherited by male children, and family's histogram, assets, beliefs and burial plans of 'older adults' are communicated to the children (Adije, 2010; Akinniyi, 2012). While this seems an acceptable practice in Igbo societies, it has always been difficult ruling out the mixed feelings surrounding the anticipation of death. Especially, when it is not clear that one would die anytime soon (Ewelukwa, 2002; Iwobi, 2008; Okafor, 2009; Umeh, 2010). Be that as it may, the unfortunate consequences of not planning for end of life as serially experienced

by most families, tend to have ignite in some Nigerians the need to make plans for themselves, families and extended relatives before dying (Doss, Truong, Nabanoga & Namaalwa, 2012; Ewelukwa, 2002; Legal Education and Will Writing, 2007; Okonkwo, Soronnadi, Udemezue & Ohia, 2002). It is in this vein that scholars have consensually agreed that there are imperative factors capable of influencing compliance rate to EoLP. They include but not limited to age, religion, educational level, experiences, knowledge and cultural values (Coelho, 2012; Chu & Woo, 2004; Downey, Engelberg, Curtis, Lafferty & Patrick, 2008; Erber, 2005; McPherson & Wister, 2008; Rotimi, 2012; Yung-ting, 2005).

Social work's engagement in EoLP issues in Nigeria should capitalize on human welfare, social protection and empowerment as stated in the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (1999). Families who are met with crisis emanating from death are usually prone to poor psychosocial and economic conditions. Thus, they should be needing family therapy, psychotherapy, legal education and resource linkages/mobilization which are services within the domain of social work (Altilio, Gardia & Otis-Green, 2005; Jones, 2006; Stein & Sherman, 2005; Teater, 2010). With reference to Nsukka community in Nigeria where the study is situated, social workers are expected to push for a new narrative of culture that will be supportive of EoLP and promotion of human rights friendly attitude toward the bereaved. This they can achieve through partnering with community councils and groups in organizing rallies and sensitization programmes on the media and other physical platforms like town-halls, markets, etc. (Onyeka, 2011; Agbawodikeizu et al, 2018).

Furthermore, the poor practice of palliative care in Nigeria owing to the feeling that it beckons death has made for the importance of EoLP as a measure to foster wellbeing for families. This implies that social workers should champion EoLP in medical settings within the community, and help family members to acknowledge the imminence of death for loved ones, and the need to make plans (Njoku, 2010; Soyannwo, 2007). Lastly, it becomes crucial to capture EoLP in the educational curriculum of Nigeria, given its importance in cushioning the pains associated with death (Liben, Papadatou & Wolfe, 2008; Merriman & Harding, 2010; Onukwugha, 2008; Soyannwo, 2010; WHO, 2010).

Studies abound that have discussed the subject of EoLP as practiced in various areas of the world (Erber, 2005; Gertstorf, Ram, Goebel, Schupp, Lindenberger, & Wagner, 2010; Kahana et al, 2004; Karel, Zir, & Braun, 2003; Karnik, Kamel, & Harper, 2002; Kim, 2011; Levi, Dallasega, Whitehead & Green, 2010; Okafor, 2009). Those that are African based have successfully unraveled the problems militating against the efficacy of the practice in the continent, but scarcely are there studies that have used mixed methods in understanding influence of demographic/culture-based factors on attitudes toward EoLP. Sequel to this, it is expected that findings from this study will be useful to significant bodies including social workers in encouraging policies and practice models that will address controversies, misconceptions, and challenges that fraught EoLP in Nigeria.

In order to achieve the above, specific research questions guiding this study include: (1) What is the attitude of residents in Nsukka LGA towards end of life planning? (2) What factors inform the attitude of these residents towards end of life planning? (3) What suggestions will the research findings offer to social work in Nigeria?

Material and methods

Ethical approval

The University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ethical Review Committee [UNTHERC], a National Institute of Health accredited Ethics Review Board granted ethical approval for this study.

Study area

The study was conducted in Nsukka area of Nigeria. The area is situated in Enugu state which is an Igbo society. It plays host to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The 2006 census puts the population of Nsukka Local Government Area [LGA] at 309,633 persons consisting of 149,241 males and 160,392 females (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). However, with an annual growth rate of 2.3% as supplied by National Population Commission [NPC] (2006), the 2016 population of Nsukka LGA was put at 316,922 persons with 152,754 males and 164,167 females. The choice of this area for the study was because it has been noted by Ezeh and Ugwu (2010) that inheritance and succession in the area are very much obtainable, although, predominantly patrilineal. Issues of inheritance and succession feature as part of EoLP.

Sampling procedure

A mixed-method of data collection and analysis was adopted for the study. The essence was to have the qualitative aspect of the research give in-depth meanings to statistics of the quantitative report. The study was carried out between the months of March to November 2016 in Nsukka, Nigeria using 600 respondents for the quantitative segment of the research and another 10 respondents for the qualitative segment. The study was concerned with adults between the ages of 18–80 years. The sample size (600) was derived statistically: by Cochran (1963):

$$n = \frac{z^2(pq)}{e^2}$$

and 10 respondents for IDIs were selected using availability sampling method.

To select respondents in each community, the researchers adopted multistage sampling, which involves, cluster, systematic, simple random, availability and purposive sampling methods. This procedure was considered relevant due to the size of the study population. The study site is clustered into three communities namely Ihen'Owerre, Nru and Mkpunano. The researchers used simple random sampling (balloting) to select Ihen'Owerre to represent the urban, while Nru as the only rural community was purposively selected. In Ihen'Owerre, the researchers adopted systematic random sampling and selected every fifth dwelling unit in the selected streets. In each selected dwelling unit, two available adults (one male and one female) were chosen in an alternate form. The process continued until the researchers had a total of 300 respondents. Also, every 20th unit that was not included in the quantitative study was chosen for the selection of five respondents (two males and three females) for interviews. In the rural community where dwelling places are unorganized, the researchers adopted availability and purposive sampling methods in selecting 300 respondents for the quantitative study and five respondents (two females and three males) for interviews. This availability method made it possible for us to achieve a 96% return rate of shared questionnaires since participants were those who willingly opted to participate in the study.

The instruments were collectively designed by the researchers to ensure uniformity. Interviews were conducted at five different locations: town-halls, schools, churches and the traditional rulers' palace. Participants in the interviews could neither read nor write and were unable to offer written consent using textual materials provided. So, we got their verbal consent before the commencement of and recording the interviews. To secure their verbal consent, the information contained in the consent form, including recording the conversation with a recording gadget, was explained to them by the interviewers. They were assured of confidentiality, anonymity and withdrawal rights, which caused them to offer their consent to participate in the study. The IDIs (In-Depth Interviews) were audio-taped and notes were taken by a note-taker, in the event of any technical failure of the recording gadget. All the interviews were conducted with a mixture of Igbo and English languages, but later transcribed into the English language by closely listening to each participant's voice as well as paralinguistic cues.

Measurement

The structured interview schedule (questionnaire) was designed by the researchers. Six survey items in Likert-scale were generated to measure the respondent's attitude towards EoLP. The participants rated the importance of each of these items on a 4-point scale: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree and 4 = strongly disagree. All those who answered Strongly Agree and Agree were re-coded as having positive attitude toward making EoL plan while those that answered Disagree and Strongly

Disagree were re-coded as having negative attitude toward making EoL plan. Variables such as age, marital status, and education were re-coded to aid cross-tabulation of independent and dependent variables. Ages 18-44 were re-coded as younger adults who can also be referred to as youths while 45 years and above were re-coded as older adults. The choice of the age brackets was influenced by its exact usage in some other studies, which provides an absolute ground for comparing findings (Erber, 2005; Karnik, Kamel & Harper, 2002).

Nigeria runs a three-phased education program. It begins with pre-primary and primary school which is officially six years. Secondary school is the next phase and it is equally six years. Any other schooling after secondary school, such as Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities is described as tertiary education, which spans for four years or more. Re-coding of educational status was as follows: non-formal education, primary education non-completed, primary education completed, and secondary education non-completed were re-coded as lower education. Secondary education completed and tertiary education non-completed were re-coded as medium education, while tertiary education completed was re-coded as higher education.

For marital status, those that indicated that they were separated, divorced and widowed were re-coded as ever married. On occupation, civil servants refer to individuals that are employed and are paid monthly by the government. Trader means someone who sells goods at the market. Artisans refer to individuals in a skilled trade that make things by hand and they include carpenters or furniture makers, painters, seamstresses, tailors, weavers, bricklayers, welders, electricians, and plumbers. Finally, the predominant religions in the studied communities include Catholics, Protestants and Jehovah Witness faithful, while the African-Traditional-Religion (ATR) refers to the practice of believing in indigenous deities.

Data analysis

The researchers distributed 600 copies of questionnaires out of which 577 were retrieved and valid to work with. SPSS version 20 and NVivo10 software were employed to manage collected data. All p-values less than 0.05 were considered to be statistically significant. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and percentages were used in presenting the results. Logistic regression analysis was used to predict associations/relationships between the variables – 'attitudes toward EoLP' and 'gender, residence, age, marital status, occupation, level of education, religion and income level of respondents'. Chi-square test was used to assess the statistical associations between variables. For the analysis of qualitative data, audio files containing data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim into English language. Data coding was done with the application of open and axial qualitative analytic method by Newman and Robson (2012) and coded data were sorted/

grouped into nodes with the use of NVivo10 software. With the use of the same software, the grouped data were analyzed systematically by identifying emerging thematic units which were then organized according to the research questions/aims of the study, thereby, complementing the quantitative data.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the 577 respondents to the questionnaire are presented below (see table 1). Presented as well are socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents to the interviews (see table 2).

Table 1
Respondents' demographic characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	311	53.9
	Female	266	46.1
Age	Younger adults 18 - 44years)	409	70.9
	Older adults 45years+)	168	29.1
Marital status	Single	277	48.0
	Married	242	41.9
	Ever married	58	10.1
Occupation	Self employed	228	39.5
	Students	178	30.8
	Civil servants	108	18.7
	Unemployed	63	10.9
Level of education	Lower education	150	26.0
	Medium education	277	48.0
	Higher education	150	26.0
Religion	Catholic	275	47.7
	Other Christian	271	47.0
	African-Traditional	31	5.4
Monthly income	Lower income	187	51.1
	Medium income	112	30.6
	Higher income	67	18.3
Attitude	Positive attitude	282	48.9
	Negative attitude	295	51.1

Table 2
Characteristics of the respondents that participated in the IDI in Ihen'Owerre and Nru communities (N=10)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female
Marital status	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single	Single
Age	Younger	Younger	Younger	Older	Older	Younger	Older	Older	Older	Older
Occupation	Student	Civil servant	Student	Trader	Artisan	Student	Trader	Student	Artisan	Artisan
Educational status	Tertiary non-completed	Tertiary completed	Secondary non-completed	Primary completed	Tertiary non-completed	Tertiary completed	Tertiary non-completed	Secondary completed	Tertiary non-completed	Tertiary completed
Religion	Protestant	Pentecostal	Jehovah Witness	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic	Catholic	Pentecostal	Catholic	Catholic
Place of residence	Urban	Urban	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural	Rural	Rural

Table 3
Chi-squared tests for factors influencing respondents' attitudes toward EoLP and demographic characteristics

	Views on whether it is proper to plan to EoL		Views on whether the respondents would defer their EoLP at present			Views on what the respondents will do when their spouse(s) request they make EoLP			Who should make such plan			Do you have a next of kin		General Attitude toward EoLP	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Don't know	Will agree	Will disagree	Don't know	Young people	Old people	Don't know	Yes	No	Positive	Negative
Sex															
Male %	56.7	42.3	48.1	70.4	47.6	54.2	61.3	49.4	66.4	50.9	45.5	57.4	41.1	55.0	52.9
Female %	43.3	57.7	51.9	29.6	52.4	45.8	38.7	50.6	33.6	49.1	54.5	42.6	58.9	45.0	47.1
Chi-square	.007*		.000*			.078			.004*			.001*		.616	
Age															
Younger adults %	69.1	78.4	86.6	30.9	70.9	70.3	72.5	70.4	58.8	72.6	87.3	72.2	66.1	63.1	78.3
Older adults %	30.9	21.6	13.4	69.1	20.7	29.7	27.5	29.6	41.2	27.4	12.7	27.8	33.9	36.9	21.7
Chi-square	.053		.000*			.883			.000*			.188		.000*	
Marital status															
Single %	48.5	45.9	59.8	41.5	61.0	45.8	43.7	52.3	42.0	48.8	56.4	51.2	36.3	44.3	51.5
Married %	41.2	45.0	35.0	59.9	37.8	53.1	52.1	27.2	43.5	41.9	38.2	41.1	45.2	42.6	41.4
Ever married	10.3	9.0	5.2	25.7	1.2	1.0	4.2	20.6	14.5	9.2	5.5	7.7	18.5	13.1	7.1
Chi-square	.746		.000*			.000*			.190			.000*		.034*	
Educational Level															
Lower %	24.0	34.2	24.5	30.3	24.4	20.3	31.0	27.6	26.7	24.6	34.5	14.6	67.7	25.5	26.4
Medium %	46.8	53.2	53.1	33.6	53.7	50.0	47.2	46.9	44.3	50.9	36.4	52.5	31.5	43.6	52.2
Higher %	29.2	12.6	22.4	36.2	22.0	29.7	21.8	25.5	29.0	24.6	29.1	32.9	.8	30.9	21.4
Chi-square	.001*		.001*			.185			.242			.000*		.027*	

Results in Table 3 show the relationships between independent variables [demographic characteristics] and dependent variables [attitude toward EoLP]. The table also reveals the significance of their relationships.

Gender

The results in table 3 reveal that gender is a strong factor that influences people's attitude toward EoLP. More male respondents (70.4%) indicated that they would not want to defer their EoL plan at present whereas slightly over half (52.4%) of the female respondents were indifferent about their choice. Also, the difference between male and female choices of deferring their EoL plan was significant (x^2 = 22.605; df = 2, P< 0.000).

Again, more of the male respondents (66.4%) indicated that EoLP should be for young people and that they (57.4%) have next of kin when compared with the female respondents with statistically significant relationship of x^2 = 11.253; df = 2, P< 0.004 and x^2=10.366; df = 1; p<0.001 respectively. More female than male respondents expressed negative attitude toward EoLP, though the statistical relationship is not significant (x^2 =.252; df = 1; p<0.616). This result could be connected with the patrilineal feature of EoLP which seems to have excluded females to a large extent. The narratives below illuminate further:

> What I can say is that many women are afraid to talk about death and preparing for it. Men own properties and engage several life-threatening activities to earn a living. They will die quicker than women. So they need to plan [IDI: Older-male, Nru community].
> I will make EoLP when I am 80 years old because my husband might have died by then [IDI: Older-female, Ihen'Owerre community].

Age

Age is another important factor that showed a significant relationship with attitudes toward EoLP. From the results, 86.6% of the younger adults indicated that they would defer their end-of-life plan at present as against 13.4% of the older adults with a strong statistically significant relationship (161.403; df=2; p<0.000). Again, a greater percentage (72.6%) of the younger adult respondents believed that EoLP is for older adults. The chi-square value: 17.039; df=2; p<0.000 shows a statistically significant relationship between the age of respondents and their perception of who should make end of life plan. This finding is corroborated in the below narrative:

> It is the older ones that are supposed to make a decision on how to share their property because they will die first and hand over the baton to us to continue the race. Nobody is praying to stay alive and bury his/her children [IDI: Younger-male, Ihen'Owerre community].

On the issue of respondents' attitude toward EoLP, a greater percentage of the younger adult respondents (78.3%) had negative attitude toward EoLP than the older adult respondents (21.7%). The chi-square value: x^2 =16.107; df = 1; p<.000

demonstrated the statistically significant relationship between age and attitude toward EoLP. However, in the IDIs with younger adult respondents, narratives were supportive of EoLP for all persons:

> It is not everybody that does it in our community and many people here avoid thinking about it because they are afraid to die and making such plan makes one think about death and can even lead to death [IDI: Younger-male, Ihen'Owerre community].

> Many of our community members do not plan for their death due to ignorance. In this planning for death, our people don't usually do it and I will take it as ignorance because some of them don't understand it and because of their fear for death, they will die without making any plan for the welfare of their families [IDI: Younger-female, Nru community].

To justify why everyone, regardless of age needs to make end-of-life plans in the study area, is a scenario of the death of survivors that occurs as a result of persons not planning for end-of-life. These survivors, unaware of what comprise the properties of the dead, are forced to swear before a shrine with zero tolerance for lying. As a result of their unawareness, they make errors and are killed by the powers of the shrine. The narrative below explains further:

> Our people find it difficult to plan for their death and when they die you will see their children struggling for lands which they don't know the actual owners. The children will be called to swear to an oath safeguarded by a deity for proof of ownership, and then the person will go and swear for what he is not sure of. After that, the person will start having health problems which will eventually lead to his death, and that is what is killing our youths in this community. We have a very strong deity here that spares no liar and we all know that it is the root cause of the deaths of our youths but no one is making effort to stop that practice. Some people hide the truth about property they own from their children, keep it within themselves and die with it; then their children will be suffering for what they don't know. It is now that people should carry out this campaign so that everybody will tell their children about their property [IDI: Younger-male, Ihen'Owerre community].

> I used to think that the plan should be for older people but considering what is happening now, everybody should start planning, whether old or young [IDI: Younger-male, Ihen'Owerre community].

Also, we found that the religious background of the respondents impacted their attitudes toward EoLP. The quote below explains:

> In our community here, people believe that any person who is sick can always recover

as a result of miracles, so there is no need planning for what will happen after death since the person may recover. And I have seen some miracles happen and the people recovered. Even a dead person has risen from the dead after a pastor prayed. [IDI: Younger-female, Ihen'Owerre community].

Marital status

Respondents who are married (59.9%) were not ready to defer their EoL plan at present. This finding may be as a result of the negative experiences usually faced by families without such a plan in the communities. The chi-square value: $x^2 = 115.362$; df =4; p<0.000 indicates a statistically significant relationship between respondents' marital status and choice to defer end of life plan at present. With respect to agreeing to request from spouses to make EoL plan, more of the respondents that are married (53.1%) were affirmative when compared with those that are single and ever married. The chi-square value: $x^2 = 70.629$; df = 4; p<0.000 also indicates a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Moreover, more of the respondents that are single (51.5%) had a negative attitude toward EoLP. This implies that unmarried people do not embrace the idea of planning for EoL based on the chi-square value ($x^2 = 6.773$; df = 2; p<0.034).

Education

Here, more of the respondents with medium education (53.2%) considered it proper to plan for EoL than all those with lower and higher education (34.2% and 12.6%) respectively. This is represented by chi-square value: $x^2 = 13.816$; df =2; p<0.001 which is statistically significant. Also, more of the respondents with lower education (67.7%) said that they do not have next of kin. One explanation for this is that their level of education may not have exposed them to the importance of having next of kin. This came out clearly in the chi-square value: $x^2 = 153.446$; df = 2; p<.000 which indicates a statistically significant relationship between the variables. Again, more of the respondents with medium education (43.6%) had positive attitude toward EoLP when compared with the others. The relationship between respondents' level of education and their attitude toward EoLP was established in the chi-square value: $^2 = 7.260$; df = 2; p<.027 as it was statistically significant. Data from the interview differed with the quantitative report. Participants held that EoLP was even practiced by their uneducated forebears, especially the sharing of landed properties. Therefore, they felt that the practice poorly connects with one's level of education. The narrative below explains further:

If our uneducated ancestors did not show us the way to do some certain things, it will not be possible for us to sit here and be talking and we will not be able to know how land should be shared. So I think that both the educated and uneducated should plan for end-of-life. [IDI: Older-male, Nru community].

Table 4

Predictors of influence of some socio-demographic characteristics on people's attitudes toward EoLP from logistic regression

Independent variables	B	S.E	Wald	Df	Sig	Exp (B)
Sex	.102	.224	.209	1	.647	1.108
Residence	-.035	.236	.022	1	.882	.966
Age	-.779	.265	8.668	1	.003*	.459
Marital status	.076	.208	.133	1	.716	1.079
Occupation	.088	.138	.405	1	.524	1.092
Level of education	-.439	.189	5.402	1	.020*	.644
Religion	-.125	.173	.522	1	.470	.883
Income level	-.115	.178	.416	1	.519	.891
Constant	1.971	.783	6.333	1	.012	7.179

* Significant

Regression analysis identified factors that influence attitude towards EoLP (see table 4). Age and level of education showed a positive association with attitude toward EoLP. In other words, it shows that a unit increase in the age of the respondents would bring about 0.459 unit positive change in their attitude toward EoLP. Likewise, similar results were observed with the level of education of the respondents. Data from the interviews also supported the above finding.

> In this world, planning for EoL depends on the nature of the individual. The more the person advances, the more he/she will see the need to make plans for end-of-life [IDI: Older-female, Ihen'Owerre community].

Discussion

We examined issues surrounding planning for end-of-life using an Igbo society in Nigeria. Existing literature revealed that this practice inspires mixed feelings because of the fear of death (Ewelukwa, 2002; Iwobi, 2008; Okafor, 2009; Umeh, 2010). The study revealed a negative attitude toward EoLP despite the existence of some of its elements within studied communities. The quantitative and qualitative findings from this study clearly showed that gender, ignorance, religion, fear of death, marital status, age, and educational attainment are the most significant factors influencing attitudes toward EoLP. Specifically, the findings indicate that more female respondents are willing to defer their EoLP than males. This is consequent on orientation given to them by men in Igbo societies, which states that men are to die first while the women stay alive to take care of the children. Akin to this finding

are the reports of Doss et al. (2012), Umeh (2010), Ewelukwa (2002), Iwobi (2008), Okonkwo et al. (2002) that focus more on women and children as the supposed benefactors of EoL plan made by men. The studies reported that women are not supposed to own properties in traditional Igbo society. The implication here is that females could be at high risk of not having EoL plan as a result of this orientation and this calls for the attention of policymakers, relevant agencies and social workers to focus efforts on the enlightenment of women. The women if enlightened can also on their own part influence their husbands and brothers to plan too, which further helps to strengthen the practice.

Age featured as a strong determinant of attitude toward EoLP. For instance, the majority of the younger adult respondents believed that having EoL plan is not proper, and prefer to defer their EoL plan at present compared to older adult respondents. Over half of younger adult respondents showed a negative attitude toward EoLP and believe that making EoL plan should be for older adults. This could be because they think death only meets them at old age as Erber (2005) observed in the United States. Also, they felt that making such a plan when they do not have properties does not make sense to them. Moreover, they would not by such plan beckon on death to meet them. The results of the regression analysis presented in table 4 reveal a strong positive relationship between age and attitudes toward EoLP. This is similar to results of the study by Karnik, Kamel and Harper (2002) at the University of Rochester which reveal that the youths rarely think of preparing for EoL.

Furthermore, we discovered a significant relationship between respondents' level of education and their attitude toward EoLP. For instance, more of the respondents with medium and high education considered it proper to plan for EoL and expressed a positive attitude toward EoLP, as against those with lower education. On the contrary, the qualitative data showed that EoLP, particularly, the sharing of landed properties have long been practiced by their forebears, who were never formally educated. So, they felt that one's level of education would not mean that the person will have no properties to plan with. Nevertheless, evident in literature are reports of a positive association between educational attainments and attitude toward EoLP (Downey, et al., 2008; Yung-ting, 2005; Kahana et al., 2004; Karel, Zir & Braun, 2003; Karnik, Kamel & Harper, 2002).

From the qualitative data, the researchers found the effect of traditional belief on attitudes toward EoLP. Majority of the respondents that were interviewed report that the idea of making EoL plan fills one's mind with thoughts of death and could eventually lead to it. Very importantly, we discovered a practice among the younger adults in the communities that falsely swearing to an oath to claim ownership of the property of a deceased father leads to the death of youths in the community. As it is believed that they are killed by a very strong deity that has zero tolerance for lies. This reinforced the need for EoLP in the study area, so as to ensure that younger persons get to have an accurate knowledge of the properties of their fathers. They

believed that it will prevent them from ignorantly lying before the deity each time they are asked to swear before it in a bid to claim the properties of their late fathers. Findings from the study also revealed that the belief in miraculous healing from death-threatening situations prevent people from planning for end-of-life. To them, they should not make EoLP when through miracles there is a chance to live again. This could mean that making EoLP would be an underestimation of the powers that can save them from dying. Sequel to the above-narrated incidence, assertions of the theory of planned behavior posited by Ajzen (1985) seems corroborated, in the sense that attitudes toward the practice come from intents influenced by factors such as education, traditional/religious beliefs and practices, gender, and age.

Against the backdrop, it is imperative that EoLP becomes a subject to discuss, champion and taught in countries like Nigeria by Governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies, including social workers. These agencies and professionals should ensure that certain stereotypes toward the practice are constructively dealt with, particularly gender and age-based stereotypes.

Social work in Nigerian tertiary institutions could begin by expanding its curriculum to include areas of palliative care practices and end-of-life planning as a standalone course while encouraging practice specialty in that regard. This will help train specialists who could foster media and physical engagements for public advocacy with regards to planning for end-of-life, and challenging cultural practices that clamp on its progress. They could further influence the Government of Nigeria through its legislative arms to encourage legislation and policies that will promote seamless EoLP for Nigerians. Likewise, social workers could through the same legislative process advocate for the inclusion of EoLP in the country's education curriculum. This could be a topic in Civic Education subject, which is compulsory for all secondary school students in Nigeria.

Finally, the study was not void of limitations. First, examining people's attitude toward planning for their death brought about some ill feelings, negative reactions, and rejection from the respondents. For instance, some of those selected for the study in 'Ihen'Owerre' made some negative reactions when they were approached to participate in the study. Some of which include: 'I am not dying now, you will have to keep my copy of the questionnaire so I can fill it when I'm about to die' and 'why did you choose to study a topic like this? Anyway, I am not interested, take back your questionnaire and leave my house'. As a result of this, some copies of the questionnaire were not returned, though a few. More so, the study area as an Igbo dominated area elevates Igbo cultural influence. Therefore, the researchers recommend a similar study to be carried out in an entirely different cultural atmosphere.

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