Previous life styles and neglect in old age: Perceptions and conceptions of community leaders in Zambia[1]

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This article is aimed at adding new knowledge to the existing literature on how previous life styles can lead to neglect in old age using the perceptions and conceptions of community leaders in rural and urban Zambia. The article which is based on qualitative data collected from community leaders in Zambia involved in addressing problems of elder abuse argues that previous life styles are playing a part in the neglect of some elder people in rural and urban Zambia. The specific previous life styles which are leading to their neglect include devaluing of the family members and failure to invest in private social protection during their days of productivity. Solutions on how to prevent neglect in old age have also been suggested using the perceptions and conceptions of community leaders in Zambia. The article further argues that since the world is moving towards population ageing and given the fact that neglect of elder people is a global problem, the revelations made in this article have significant implications for social gerontology, social work and public health education, practice and research. This is because social gerontologists, social workers and public health workers are among the frontline workers dealing with the problem of elder neglect. Directions for future research are also suggested.

Key words: *Previous life styles; Old age; Neglect; rural and urban Zambia*

Background and introduction

Neglect of elder people which is one of the typologies of elder abuse is a global problem (World Health Organization [WHO], 2008; HelpAge International, 2011; Phelan, 2013; WHO, 2015). This is because it is being experienced in every country of this world (United Nations [UN],

2002; World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Phelan, 2013; Jackson, 2014; Cadmus, Owoaje and Akinyemi, 2015). For example, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE] (2013) has reported that globally, the number of cases of elder maltreatment is projected to increase as many countries have rapidly ageing populations. Cooper, Selwood and Livingston (2008); Phelan (2013) and HelpAge International (2014) estimate that of the total 868 000 000 older people [that is, people aged 60 years and above] globally, between 2 percent and 10 percent suffer abuse, which includes the pervasive issue of neglect. This means that neglect of elder people is an important public health and societal problem that manifests itself in both developing and developed countries (WHO, 2008, p.vii). In absolute numbers, this means that between 17, 360, 000 to 86, 868, 000 older people suffer abuse [neglect] globally. This global statistical information shows how serious elder abuse [neglect] is globally.

Notwithstanding the above, there are few studies that have been undertaken on neglect of elder people in Zambia (Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013). In light of this, in 2014-2015, I did a qualitative study on elder abuse in rural and urban Zambia with 31 community leaders involved in addressing elder abuse in Zambia. During the study, one risk factor which is rarely talked about in the existing literature strongly came out from all the informants when discussing neglect of elder people in their communities, and that was elder people's previous life styles, which was also described as elder people's life styles in their days of productivity. Although neglect of the elder people is socially constructed and differs from context to context (WHO, 2008), I felt that this risk factor for neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia should be brought in scientific literature on elder abuse because it has the potential to broaden thinking and spark debates about neglect of elder people. I also felt that the risk factor has significant implications for social gerontology, social work and public health education and practice as well as on giving new directions for future research.

Literature review on neglect of elder people

In existing literature, neglect of elder people is defined as the refusal or failure to fulfill a care giving obligation (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; WHO, 2008; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). General examples of neglect could include refusing to attend to the needs of the elder person even if the resources are available; leaving them to stay in soiled

clothes or beddings; leaving them alone without anyone nearby to give them help when they need help, failure to provide water, clothing, medications, cleaning and assistance with the activities of daily living or help with personal hygiene, lack of communication or keeping in touch with the older person when the elder's children or other close relatives place him/her at a care unit or refusal to visit him/her in a care unit, social isolation, dehydration, desertion of a vulnerable older person by anyone who has assumed the responsibility for care or custody of that person, refusal of communication and leaving the care receiver alone (Wolf and Pillemer, 1982; Wolf, 2000; Hörl & Spannring, 2001; Mupila, 2008; Bavel, Jassens, Schakenraad and Thurlings, 2010; Phelan, 2013; Kabelenga, 2014).

Literature on how live styles in years of productivity lead to neglect in old age is scanty. Thorough searches of the available literature both published and grey indicate that such a gap in literature exists. Perhaps, one of the reasons for scarcity of the literature could be that none of the previous studies have established that individual life styles in days of productivity lead to their neglect in old age. This could true since neglect of elder people is culturally constructed and differs from society to society (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; WHO, 2008; Phelan, 2013). However, literatures on how elder people's own life styles lead to their neglect exist. For example in the study of elder abuse in Republic of Ireland my Manthorpe et al (2011), participants recognized that older people could contribute to their own neglect by wanting to be independent and refusing to see the reality of their situation. For instance, in that study one participant revealed this:

...they can say I'm alright, I'm not going into a home and I know several of them who have had to be actually physically more or less taken in because they were a danger to themselves, they were getting up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet and they fell and they cut their heads and all this kind of thing lying there till the morning but you know it can be the fault of the person, as well as the people attending to them (Kay, NI, urban) (Manthorpe et.al, 2011, p, 39).

On the basis of the above finding, the study concluded that elder person's life styles and their personalities were factors that needed to be added to the equation on the neglect of some older persons in Ireland (Manthorpe et al, 2011). However, the study talked about elder person's life styles and personalities in old age and not on how their life styles and personalities when they

were youths and/or when they were productive could have contributed to their neglect. Thus, it is not clear from the above findings as to whether the life styles and personalities of the elder people talked about in the study were something which they also exhibited when they were youths/productive, or it was purely a problem of old age. All in all, the above finding enlightened the existing literature. However, my article adds a new lens to the existing literature by showing how previous life styles can lead to neglect in old age using the perceptions and conceptions of the informants in rural and urban Zambia. Specifically, it focuses on neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia within family set ups [extended and nuclear families].

Study objectives

Two specific objectives guided the study:

1. To understand how previous life styles explained neglect/played a role in neglecting some elder people in rural and urban Zambia using the perceptions and conceptions of community leaders that addressed elder abuse in Zambia

2. To get the views of the informants on how to address neglect in old age in Zambia

In this article, the word community is used to denote a group of people living together in one geographical area, and thus they understand their local environment better (Osei-Hwedie, Mwansa and Katembula, 1990; Kamwengo, 2004). On the other hand, community leaders referred to include ward councilors, chief's representatives, village headmen, youths and women leaders, church (religious) leaders, the police, court judges, community crime prevention units (CCPUs), area development community members, public health workers, elder people's representatives and social workers among others.

Methodology

Material and methods

To achieve the above objectives, I collected qualitative data. This was done by conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) and one-on-one interviews with 31 community leaders [19 from rural Zambia and 12 from urban Zambia]. The informants were purposively selected to ensure that only those informants who had participated in addressing neglect of elder people in their communities participated in the study. The disparity in the number of informants was because they were more informants in rural Zambia who were readily available to participate in the study

than those in urban Zambia. One of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is that it permeates in-depth information about the particular phenomenon to be collected using the knowledge of the people who have the first hand information about that phenomenon (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2009). Thus, the approach allowed detailed and richer information on how previous life styles of some elder people in rural and urban Zambia contributed to their neglect in old age to be captured using the voices of the community leaders who had first hand information about elder neglect in their local communities. I conducted 36 interviews [22 in rural Zambia and 14 in urban Zambia]. The number of interviews conducted surpassed the number of participants (31) who participated in the study because some of the interviews were follow-up interviews with the same participants. On average each interview lasted between one hour and three hours. I conducted all the interviews myself because I wanted to make sure that I collect all the information that I needed to know about neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed manually after transcribing all the 36 interviews using the qualitative data transcribing software called Express Scribe Transcription. I first read each of the 36 transcripts several times to get a sense of the data in its entirety. During initial reading of the transcripts, open coding procedures were employed, where codes were created from what was present in the data (Pope, Loeffler and Ferrell, 2014). After identifying initial codes in the transcripts, I moved to focused coding. This involved making decisions about what codes were most relevant to the research objectives, discarding codes that were not relevant, and combining earlier codes that were similar. Constant comparison was used to look for similarities and differences in categories across the transcripts. Thus, the whole process was a back and forth process and as such it was very stressful (Creswell, 2009; Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015; Kabelenga, 2016).

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted after approval from the University of Lapland, Finland where I am pursuing my doctorate degree and community leaders in Zambia. The purpose of the study was also explained to all the potential informants before they participated in the study. Only those who were willing to participate in the study either by signing the consent form or by oral consent participated in the study. In addition, for the sake of protecting the identity of the informants and

fulfilling the study promises that I gave to the informants that the their names would not be revealed anywhere when reporting the findings of the study, I have not mentioned the actual communities were the study took place. The names of the informants have also been changed with aliases. However, I have maintained the actual verbatim transcripts from the interviews.

Findings and discussions

Demographic characteristics of the participants

The participants were aged between 27 and 72 years. Of the total 31 informants, 23 were males and 8 were females. Of the 23 males, 16 were from rural Zambia and 7 were from urban Zambia. With regard to 8 females, 5 were from urban Zambia and 3 were from rural Zambia. In terms of educational attainments, 1 participant had primary school education, 3 had gone up to high school level, 18 had college [vocational] education and 9 were university graduates [maximum of masters degree]. In addition, all the participants had participated in addressing elder abuse in their communities. There were more males than females who participated in the study because the majority of the community leaders in Zambia who are involved in addressing elder abuse are men. The result could also be explained by the fact in Zambia like in many other African countries, there are more males than females who are community leaders (Zambia National Gender Policy, 2000; The Global Gender Gap Report, 2015).

Evidence of neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia

Neglect which was perceived by the informants in both communities as deliberate refusal by family members to take care of their elderly people was also described to be common. Examples cited by the informants on how neglect was evident in their communities included elder people living in sub-standard houses, elder people not receiving any support from their family members, ignoring of elder people by family members, refusal to give food to an elder person and complaints from elder people that no one was willing to take care of them. Four informants expressed it as follows:

''Neglect is also common. They are neglected by their own families.'' **(Lainess, aged 67 – Urban Zambia).**

''Most of them are chased because they haven't had much contact with the families were they are coming from, we just get the complaints from them that No their children are not taking care of them.'' **(Thelma in her 40s – Urban Zambia).**

The perceptions and conceptions provided by the informants in urban Zambia were similar to the ones provided by their counterparts in rural Zambia:

'' They [old people] do come here [Government of Zambia – Department of Social Welfare] and the explanations they give here is that no one wants to take of them. But for us who go to the communities, you find that the quality of life that these old people live is nothing to talk about.'' **(FGD.1 – Rural Zambia).**

''Then the same neglect you can also see it in terms of ignoring them. As if this person does not exist. [Laughs informant]. You could be eating here, this old person is in a small shelter, sitted, doesn't even care, no feeling, nothing (laughs informant). That is sort of neglect.'' **(Jackson, aged 49 – Rural Zambia).**

From the above finding, it can be deduced that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, neglect of elder people is a serious problem in both urban and rural Zambia. A careful look at the above verbatim quotes implies that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions neglect of elder people in their communities usually take place at household level. It is also intentionally done by elder people's nuclear and extended family members. From another lens it seems that the type of neglect mentioned by the informant is the one called active neglect in the available international literature on elder abuse. In international literature, active neglect is described as deliberate refusal by care givers to care for an elder person such as refusal of cleaning, medication and food (Hörl & Spannring 2001:314; Bavel et.al, 2010: 34). However, from the above quotes, it is clear that neglect of elder people in the two communities is usually associated with informal care, that is, care of elder people at nuclear and extended family levels, and not at formal care level such as in institutional homes for the older people and hospitals among others. This is because in the above verbatim quotes informants did not talk about neglect of elder people among formal care givers like nurses and social workers in elder care institutions. This means that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, elder neglect in their communities is a domestic phenomenon. One possible reason for this is that the majority of elder

people in Zambia live in their communities either on their own or with their own family members and not in institutional homes for elder people the way it is in many European countries like Ireland, Finland and Netherlands among others (Fuller, 1972; World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; Kamwengo, 2004; Bavel et al, 2010; Manthorpe et al, 2011; UNECE, 2013; Mysyuk, 2015). For example, throughout Zambia [with about 13 million people], there are just 8 homes for the elder people and only handful elder people are kept in these homes and all of them in urban areas (Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013). Out of curiosity, I asked the informants in rural Zambia whether there were any institutional homes for the elder people in their community and the whole district. The response received was that they were no institutional homes for elder people in the community and the whole district. Jackson, the social worker gave his own testimony of the difficulties he faced in intervening in the plight of the neglected elder people in his community as follows: ''*Because that is also a challenge, this old person is being you know being abused by relative, but then there is no authority who can intervene. The social welfare officer can remove a child from the family, will just go – pull, remove and place, you are protected by law. But in terms of an old person, you are not protected, they say old, so if even he removes him or her, where are you taking this person. Nowhere. No homes for senior citizens.''*

From the Zambian government point of view, they are two reasons for having few institutional homes for elder people in Zambia. First, the government wants to promote and sustain the extended family system, and in the government's view one way through which this can be done is by encouraging family members to take care of the aged. This is because the extended family is seen to be the best organ to take care of the aged. Second, the Zambian government argues that it does not have the capacity to manage and sustain the homes for the elder people if they are too many (Kamwengo, 2004; Zambia Draft Ageing Policy, 2013).

Thus, the above finding also suggests that neglect of the elder people in rural and urban Zambia is socially and culturally constructed. This is because it is influenced by personal and national values and beliefs which can only be understood within its own cultural contexts.

In light of the above revelations, the next question which I asked the informants was, what are some of the main reasons that perpetrators give for neglecting elder people? One of the reasons that came out strongly from all the informants was elder people's previous life styles, which was

also described by some informants as elder people's own life styles during their years of productivity. Below are the details:

Neglect and previous life styles of an elder person

Individual elder person's lives in productive days came out strongly from the informants during the discussion on explanations for neglect of some of the elder people in their communities. The informants disclosed that elder people who mostly suffered neglect were those who also neglected their family members during their days of productivity. The main previous life styles which came out strongly were divorcing the wife, refusal to take care of the children, misuse of retirement benefits and failure to adequately invest in private social protection. Elderly men were seen to be the main victims in that type of neglect. That was because they were the ones who had those tendencies. Sadly enough, the majority of the men who fell in this category were those who were once in gainful economic activities and apparently happened to be those who were highly educated and holding influential positions in the Zambian society such as university lecturers and district governors among others. Informants revealed that it was rare for women to neglect their children during their years of productivity. As a result few elder women suffered neglect. Some of the elderly informants also put blame for neglect on themselves saying that when they were in productive years they did not invest in their own protection in old age. As a result, when they were old, they suffered the negative consequences. Typical expressions on how elder people's previous life styles fueled their neglect were as follows:

''Some those who could have been some gainful employment, mismanaged the little that they had. It was just as he was explaining to say there were not very generous with their things, like if you were in employment, or like for males when they were in their productive years, this way, there is that way.'' **(FGD.1 – rural Zambia).**

''May be one was working but then maybe you are busy just marrying, divorce, you don't care about children. We have seen one governor around here. In fact am told he has settled here. This man at one point people were even saying - can you show us your house? Can you tell us what you did to this district? So you find that those people they are the most vulnerable. They are not even given chance to talk. They are not even accepted in society on account of what they had

done when they were in those positions. [Academic] Papers themselves cannot help. But what helps is what they had done to the community when they were holding onto those positions.'' **(FGD.2 – Rural Zambia).**

''Unfortunately though, most of the aged that come here [Government of Zambia - Department of Social Welfare] abuse their resources, these are the ones now when they got their pension [retirement benefits], they left their families for greener pastures. Now they have depleted all the resources, go back to family, take care of me. Family says NO. When you were in employment, and you got your pension [retirement benefits], you left us. I have had former lecturers such as yourself here. One particular story is this lecturer used to live in Zambia, he used to teach at Munali Boys. He left Zambia, and his family left them here – wife, children for greener pastures in Swaziland. He was in Swaziland for over five years, did not communicate with his wife and children, as flirted it, even when he was leaving Ministry of Education Zambia, he just left. As he flirted, he was deported from Swaziland – learned man, very well-spoken, full of grey hair, 65 and above, he comes back to Zambia on deportation. He tries to go back to wife and children, he finds wife has remarried and moved on with her life. All the pensions he got, all the monies he got from Swaziland, non-traceable.'' **(Eunice aged 34 – Urban Zambia).**

''We say that we have to blame the older people themselves. Yes. For instance going through fifty years without thinking about social protection. Now here we are, we are old. These are the people who had the chance to introduce some kind of pension. But they didn't. And now they are the ones who are suffering so you know it's just reaping what we sowed.'' **(Grandmum aged 72 – Urban Zambia).**

A critical reflection upon the above finding suggests that although neglect applies to both elderly men and women in rural and urban Zambia, from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, it looks like there is a gendered aspect of neglect when it comes to neglect of some elder people with regard to previous personal relationships with their families in days of productivity. Thus, with the help of the informants the above result was interpreted that family and community members in Zambia rewarded life in old age according to the individual elder person's contributions to the well-being of their family members and that of their immediate community. In other words, from the informants' perceptions and conceptions the result implied that life in old age with regard to neglect of some elder people in their communities was a reflection of what

those elder people did to their family members during their days of productivity. Informants argued that if an individual elder person valued his/her family members during productive days, chances of them being neglected in old age were slim. The opposite was also possible. Perhaps this result can well be understood by thinking about the traditional African way of living for which Zambia is part of. In Africa, despite weakening of the extended family structures, people usually depend on each other for their economic survival (Bigombe and Khadiagala, 2008; Oduro, 2010). For example, those with the economic means are expected to take care of other extended family members who do not have the means. Those with the economic means are also expected to contribute more towards addressing social and economic needs in their communities. If they do not they are socially constructed as 'bad people' and are usually rewarded by neglecting them when they are faced with problems which need support either from their own family members or their community. In other words, there is reciprocity way of living in Africa – do unto others as you would like them to do unto you (Fuller, 1972; Fry, 1990; Kamwengo, 2004; Bigombe and Khadiagala, 2008; Oduro, 2010). Using the informants' revelations and previous studies on how Africans live, this result implies that neglect of some elder people in rural and urban Zambia with regard to elder people's previous life styles should be understood within the broader African norms and values on how family members are expected to relate with their extended families and other community members. This also shows the social construction of neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia by the informants.

What should be done to address neglect in old age

In trying to make the informants inform policy and programmes aimed at addressing neglect among elder people, I asked the informants to make suggestions on what they thought could be done to address neglect in old age in Zambia. Three suggestions came out strongly. These were: encourage Zambians to value the extended family in their days of productivity, introduce a universal social pension and mainstream/introduce a subject on ageing in school curricula from pre-school to tertiary education level. Details of each of these suggestions are presented below:

Value the extended family in days of productivity

Valuing of the extended family whilst in productive years was seen by the informants in both communities to be a good life style that should be embraced by community members and Zambians in general. Informants argued that elder people who valued their extended family members in their days of productivity were rarely neglected. In supporting the proposal, some cited their own experiences saying that they valued the extended family whilst they had the means to do so and those family members had reciprocated by taking care of them in old age. The expressions below confirm the above proposal:

''Thanks for what we do in productive days. I have more support from the extended family members. I personally get more help from my extended family members. They have more concern for me than my biological children. Experience what is going on and then they train from their so they see the real essence of extended family system. You can't say I am going to reap on my investment on my children no. I have kept extended family members in my home, these have appreciated more than my own children. We were affected by the HIV pandemic. We kept my wife's sister's daughter and kept her up to finishing education. This one always calls daddy, mummy, how are you? I say tomorrow is my birthday and she is the only one who sends me birthday wishes. My own children do not know when I was born. The extended family, yes it is dying down but it is of great value.'' **(Enock aged 65 – Urban Zambia).**

''If that elderly person has a family, they would not dare. It will be whispered but even the whispering will be very careful. We can improve. Yes. We can improve on what we have. The villages will never be as big as they used to be. The extended family structure will never be what it used to be but let us keep at least something, you know. Let's say we still have families, you know and so on. They should not lose sight of that, yes.'' **(Grandmum aged 72 – Urban Zambia).**

''It is good to be good to your family members when you are in productive age group, and you know we are even talking about the extended family. When you look at the African setup generally maybe it's particularly here we have heard of people who had money in the old days and those people the way they were bringing up their families they brought them up in a very very good way and neglect on their part is not there. Because of the background that they have and the foundation that they had set.'' **(FGD.2 – Rural Zambia).**

The above recommendation suggests that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions a return to the Zambian traditional way of living where extended family members depended on each other could help in addressing elder neglect in their communities. Interestingly, a closer look at the above proposal agrees with suggestions made by Fuller (1972); Kamwengo (2004); and Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy (2013) that in order improve the welfare of elder people in Zambia, the extended family system should be strengthened.

Universal social pension

The informants argued further that the Government of Zambia should introduce a universal social pension for elderly people in their communities and the whole Zambia. From the informants' perceptions and conceptions social pension meant the Government of Zambia would provide a certain amount of income to elderly people until death. This income would enable the elderly people to afford the basic necessities of life and reduce on economic vulnerability which also ignited their neglect (Kabelenga, 2016). Informants disclosed that if elder people had income, chances of them being neglected by their family members were minimal even if they lived negligent life styles in their days of productivity. Two informants expressed it as below:

'' If we talk of universal pensions, at least that will ensure a pension to an older person and with that bit of income even those that want to support them will do it because they know that there's something at least to be able for them to support the older people. One thing found in our work is if financially empowered and live independently, older people are respected in their communities and by their own children. So policies to support older people to have their own income in old age should be encouraged. In short universal social pension. This makes them live independently. If not they may kill them. It also reduces on other types of abuses. In Lesotho they have universal pension and has reduced on abuse.'' **(Lainess aged 67 – Urban Zambia).**

''They should empower them financially; they should be on a salary, a monthly salary whether he was working or not working. The government should at least budget for them and give them a salary so that the poverty is reduced.'' **(Royd in his 40s – Rural Zambia).**

The above proposal implies that the informants were of the view that elder neglect in their communities could be minimized through economic empowerments of the elder people. That was because reliable and predictable incomes could help in reducing on some of the risk factors for elder neglect in their communities such as being devalued by the family members. A critical reflection upon this proposal reveals that the informants' thinking is also in line with the policy measures suggested by many policy makers and researchers globally on how to improve the welfare of elderly people. Social pension globally is seen as critical in addressing most of the problems associated with old age (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; HelpAge International, 2014; WHO, 2015; Kabelenga, 2016).

Mainstreaming ageing/introduce school subject on ageing in school curricula

Because of deteriorations in traditional ways of living such as weakening of villages and extended family, and the fact that many parents have little time to teach children traditional ways of living since most of them work outside the home, informants argued the government of Zambia to consider either mainstreaming ageing or introduce a specific subject on ageing in school curricula from pre-school to tertiary education levels. That was seen to be important in that most children spent much of their time in school classrooms and as such the school could be used as one of main social institutions for teaching children ageing issues. Informants in both rural and urban Zambia felt that taking such as an approach would help the younger people to understand some of the common problems associated with old age and what they needed to do whilst there were still young to avoid going through those problems when they grow old. Typical sentiments on this proposal were as follows:

''Actually it will do a great deal if we introduce ageing in school. You know us from the old school we were made not to fear the old man, the old man was our friend. When there is a problem, it was the old man in the village, the father to your father is the one who you played with it - you go back to the old school, you can sleep on their beds, you are free with them. Now

that culture we are losing it. So I think it is a good way that people should understand this.'' **(FGD.5 – Rural Zambia).**

''I think mainstreaming it in the education; in the education curricula the way it is with gender issues so that people understand the way gender is, a girl child such things. Now everyone is aware of them and things have changed. May be if the foundation is good, the bible says that teach the child when he is child and when they grow they will not depart from those values.'' **(FGD.1 – Rural Zambia).**

''Because like you say charity begins at home. And if they did not experience charity they will not recognize it even if it hit them in the face. I would say a subject on it on especially since we have an aging policy they could look at it, you know, to have them to know how they age from the day they are born up to there. You know what is involved and so on. They bring in the tradition.'' **(Grandmum aged 72 – Urban Zambia).**

''If parents are busy working class they [children] spend most of time in school. I think having a school subject on ageing, gerontology on its own can be good but can be called different names at different educational levels. Yes. You learn about your life beginning the other way round. You are still young then you learn about how you will grow old. That can be very good.'' **(Eunice aged 34 – Urban Zambia).**

From the above expressions, the following deductions arise: first, it implies that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, addressing elder neglect in their communities lies in promoting the culture of enabling Zambians to understand how life in old age is from childhood which implies living responsive life styles at all stages of human life (Fuller, 1972; Fry, 1990; Kamwengo, 2004). In other words, the result entails that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, the lasting solution in addressing elder neglect in their communities lies in having a new crop of Zambians with completely different beliefs, norms and attitudes about ageing and that required good socialization of the younger Zambian generation about ageing. The result implies also that the informants appreciated the importance of formal education in reconstruction of human mind, beliefs, values, attitudes and thinking. A critical reflection upon the above proposal also suggests that the informants' thoughts are in line with the global perspectives on how to change human society. For example, social change agents such as social workers,

sociologists, educationalists and politicians among others argue that formal education inculcates scientifically proven values on how to take society forward. Social change agents also argue that formal education is crucial in destroying suspicions, myths and other detrimental ways of living because it unlocks students from the web of backward values, norms, beliefs and attitudes. (World Conference on Education for All, 1990; Hall and Midgley, 2004; Save the Children, 2008; Kabelenga, 2013). When I also carefully reflect upon the above recommendation, it suggests that informants were in favor of universal interventions approach to elder abuse prevention as suggested by WHO (2002). From this buzz organization's perspective, universal approaches in violence prevention aim at groups or the general population without regard to individual risk. Examples include violence prevention curricula delivered to all students in a school or children of a particular age and community-wide media campaigns. The informants' recommendation is also in line with what has been done in Canada. In an attempt to prevent elder abuse in Canada, a None Governmental Organisation called Health Canada has mainstreamed elder abuse prevention in the Canadian School Curriculum. It targets children aged 3 and above. In doing this, it is hoped that children and young people will prepare themselves adequately for life in old age and develop greater respect for the elderly and will be much less inclined, now and in the future, to mistreat them (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002).

Conclusions

On the basis of the study findings, the following conclusions arise:

To begin with, from the informants' revelations, it is clear that previous life styles are key risk factors for elder neglect in rural and urban Zambia. Specific risky previous life styles include devaluing the family members and failure to adequately invest in private social protection when one is in their days of productivity. It seems that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, family members [nuclear and extended] are a form of informal social protection in old age in Zambia, and if one does not invest in his/her family members and his/her own private social protection during their days of productivity, they stand higher chances of suffering neglect in old age. This is because the Zambian people from the perceptions and conceptions of the informants rewarded life in old age according to the ways the particular individual contributed to the well-being of his or her family members.

Arriving from the aforesaid, it follows that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions elder neglect in their communities reflected how the particular elder person had lived their life styles in their days of productivity. This means that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, elder neglect in their communities had the historical aspect rooted in the neglected elder people. In light of this, it can be argued that the informants blamed neglect on the neglected elder people themselves in their communities. This means that the element of blaming the victims still exists in Zambia when talking about neglect of elder people.

In addition, it seems that the informants' perceptions and conceptions are shaped by the African ways of living of reciprocity where those with the means are always expected to take care of family members without the means. This entails that African traditional values, norms and beliefs are at the centre stage in understanding neglect of elder people in rural and urban Zambia. This shows the importance of the linkages between the macro level values, norms and beliefs and the meso and micro level values, norms and beliefs. From the revelations made by the informants, it is clear that these levels shape each other and produce either good or bad relationships at family and community levels. If they produce bad relationships, they produce elder neglect. If they produce good relationships, they prevent elder neglect. From the informants' views, individual persons in their communities play a pivotal role in establishing these relationships and are usually established when one is still productive. It seems that the value of 'do unto others as you would like them to do unto you' is also at the center stage in understanding elder neglect in rural and urban Zambia.

The findings also reinforce the widely held view in elder abuse global debates that neglect of the elder people is socially constructed and differs from society to society (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002; WHO, 2008; Phelan, 2013; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). As can be seen from the above findings, informants justified neglect of elder people in the African values of dependence and reciprocity. Thus, the findings signify the importance of paying particular attention to the local contexts, values, norms and beliefs when trying to understand and address elder neglect.

It can also be concluded that from the informants' perceptions and conceptions, solutions in addressing elder neglect in rural and urban Zambia lie in social reconstruction of the whole Zambian society. From the informants' suggestions, the reconstruction could be done by encouraging Zambians to value extended family members in their days of productivity, introducing a universal pension and mainstreaming/introducing a subject on ageing in school curricula from pre-school up to tertiary level. This means that from the informants' views the social reconstruction of the Zambian society should take place at three levels namely at micro level, meso level and macro levels. As already said, this is because these levels are interdependent, and how they relate either bring about or prevent elder neglect.

It seems also that from the informants' views solution to addressing elder neglect in rural and urban Zambia lie in embracing some of the traditional Zambian ways of living. The common tradition seem to be placed on embracing the family despite the rapid changes that Zambian families are faced with such as weakening of the extended family because of modernity, migration, weakening of villages and mortality of family members (see Kamwengo, 2004; Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013; Kabelenga, 2015 and Kabelenga, 2016). This was clear when the informants proposed the need to value the extended family system.

It can also be concluded that the informants were of the view that in order to find a lasting solution to the prevention of elder neglect in Zambia, there is need not only to focus on the current generation of elder people but also on the next generation. This was evident when the informants proposed the need to encourage Zambians to value the extended family members during their days of productivity and also the proposal on mainstreaming ageing/introduce a subject on ageing in school curricula from pre-school to tertiary education levels. The conclusion that can be made from these conceptions and perceptions is that the informants proposed futuristic and forward looking approaches to the prevention of elder neglect in Zambia. In other words, the inward and outward approaches (Merkestein, 2008).

Limitations

This article has two limitations. First, the article is written on the basis of the qualitative data collected from 31 participants in Zambia. It should be noted that one of the main central aims of any qualitative research inquiry is to provide in-depth information about a particular

phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Pope, Loeffler and Ferrell, 2014). Therefore, the revelations made in this article should be cautiously applied to other parts of Zambia and the whole world. For example, although the findings presented in this article are from 31 participants drawn from rural and urban Zambia, they should not be generalized to other parts of the world. This is because elder neglect is socially constructed and what may be true in one setting may not be true in other settings (Kabelenga, 2014; Kabelenga, 2015; Kabelenga, 2016). Second, the study did not get the views of the neglected elder people who suffered the actual negative consequences. Thus, the reasons for their neglect and solutions for addressing elder neglect from their experiences might be different from the perceptions and conceptions of the community leaders who participated in this study. Given its limitations, however, few previous studies have specifically examined how previous life styles could lead to elder neglect. This represents a major strength of this article as it has added new lens to the existing literature.

Implications of the findings for social gerontology, social work, public health education, practice and research

Given the fact that the world is moving towards population ageing and the fact that neglect of elder people is a global problem (WHO, 2008; Global AgeWatch Index, 2014; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015), the revelations made in this article have significant implications for social gerontology, social work and public health educations that deal with the problem of elder neglect. The implications which arise include the following:

To begin with, the linkages between previous life styles and neglect in old age should be included in social gerontology, social work and public health educations. The linkages should be examined and talked about at two levels – informal level and formal level. At informal level, the focus should be on helping people to understand the importance of valuing the family and how that could help in prevention of neglect in old age. This means that social gerontologists, social workers and public health workers should find ways and means of addressing the factors that are weakening family ties across the world. One viable solution lies in making individual persons to understand and appreciate the importance of establishing good family relationships in the days of productivity. This is particular important in regions such as Asia and Africa where the family plays a bigger role in the well-being of the elder people (Cliquet, 19998; Bigombe and Khadiagala, 2008; Kabelenga, 2016). At formal level, focus should be on promotion of social

protection, and in particular private and public social protection measures. Introduction of universal social pension for the elderly people should also be strongly advocated for. This is very important especially that support for most elder people from the family is weakening either because of individual elder person's life styles or changes in the family structures (Ibid; World Report on Ageing and Health, 2015). Helping people to understand how life styles in days of productivity can fuel or prevent neglect in old age has the potential to make people lead responsive life styles at all levels of human society [individual, family, community, national and international levels] and this is critical in the prevention of neglect in old age.

In addition, despite the rapid changes faced by the family, Social Gerontologits, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should support certain traditional ways of living in different parts of the world which have traditionally been used in the prevention of elder neglect. These should be context specific. For example, in the context of Zambia and Africa in general, these could include strengthening the extended families and villages. This is because these are some of the traditional mechanisms that have been traditionally used in Zambia and Africa in the prevention of elder neglect (Fuller, 1972; Fry, 1990; Kamwengo, 2004; Draft Zambia National Ageing Policy, 2013; Kabelenga, 2016). Social gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should know that it is not everything that is considered to be tradition is bad. Some of the traditional ways of living and practices could be the viable solutions to the current social problems such as elder neglect. As can be seen from the revelations made by the informants, elder neglect was blamed on departure from the traditional ways of living such as valuing the extended family, dependence and reciprocity of some elder people in Zambia during their days of productivity.

The findings also imply that when trying to understand and intervene in elder neglect cases, Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should learn to pay particular attention to the local values, norms, beliefs and attitudes that local people attach to elder neglect. This can be done by consulting with the local people who understand their local environments better. This is essential when coming up with elder neglect interventions which are sensitive to the culture of the local people.

Lastly but not the least, the findings also imply that in trying to find the lasting solution to the prevention of neglect in old age, universal approaches to neglect prevention should be embraced (World Report on Violence and Health, 2002). That is, Social Gerontologists, Social Workers and Public Health Workers should not only be targeting the elder people who are already at risk of neglect, but also target those who have not shown any risk of suffering neglect. These could include targeting the children, the youths and adults. That can be done by sensitizing them about life in old age and risk factors for elder neglect. It is also important to sensitize the people in the labour market about the dangers of misusing retirement benefits, divorcing their wives and neglecting the children and other extended family members after receiving their retirement benefits. This is critical in the social construction of the people before they reach old age and fall prey to neglect.

Suggested directions for future research

This article suggests two directions for future research:

First, because this article is based on qualitative research which makes it difficult to be generalized to other parts of the world, future research should be encouraged to investigate further how previous life styles could lead to elder neglect. Undertaking separate studies in different countries of the world, for example in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America among others can be a good approach. This may help in bringing about a better understanding of the linkages between previous life styles and neglect in old age and in turn inform social gerontology, social work and public health educations, practice and research as well as local and international policies on prevention of elder neglect.

Second, since this study did not get the views of the neglected elder people, future studies should examine how previous life styles could lead to neglect in old age from the experiences of the neglected elder people. This is essential in bringing about a better understanding of the linkages between previous life styles and neglect in old age.

Notes

1 **NOTE:** There is no potential conflict of interest regarding this manuscript. However, the materials used in this article are part of my own going PhD thesis. Part of the materials have also already appeared in my other articles published in Journal of Community Positive Practices, XIV(2), 2014 and Journal of Postmodernism Problems, Vol.5, No.1 and Vol.5, No.3, 2015. In addition, for the sake of protecting the identity of the research participants, I have replaced the actual names of the participants with aliases.

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