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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROLE OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS IN IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF THE ELDERLY IN EKITI STATE

Olufemi M Olubamise
Department of Basic Medical Science, College of Health Sciences and Technology, Ijero-Ekiti, Nigeria
femibamise@gmail.com

Egbinade Joshua Oluwafemi
Department of Health Information Management
Faculty of Basic Medical Science, Adeleke University Ede

Deborah Bolanle Olubamise
Department of Science Educationm, Federal University Oye-Ekiti

ABSTRACT
This study investigated the role of intergenerational programs in improving the well-being of the elderly in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Utilizing a quantitative research design, a structured survey was administered to 260 elderly participants aged 60 years and above, selected through stratified random sampling from various intergenerational initiatives. The survey assessed participants' experiences with intergenerational programs and their perceived impact on social interaction, mental health, and feelings of loneliness. The results indicated that participation in these programs significantly enhanced the well-being of elderly individuals, with participants reporting a mean well-being score of 4.05 compared to 3.50 for non-participants ($t(258) = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$). Notably, 78% of participants experienced reduced feelings of loneliness, and 66% reported improved mental health. The study highlighted a strong preference for educational (mean = 3.60) and cultural exchange programs (mean = 4.00), emphasizing the need for tailored initiatives that address the specific needs of older adults. These findings underscore the importance of developing structured intergenerational programs to foster social connections and improve the quality of life for the elderly in Ekiti State.

Keywords: Intergenerational Programs, Elderly Well-Being, Social Interaction, Mental Health, Ekiti State, Quantitative Research, Community Development

Introduction
Intergenerational programs are designed to intentionally bring together different generations in ongoing, mutually beneficial activities. These initiatives aim to foster understanding and respect across age groups, enriching the lives of all participants. Key principles of effective intergenerational programs include reciprocity, sustainability, intentionality, and comprehensive training (Thielmann et al., 2020). The modern intergenerational movement began in the 1960s, during the "War on Poverty," with initiatives like the Foster Grandparent Program, which aimed to support children with special needs through the involvement of low-income older adults (Hafeez et al., 2018). Initially

focused on bridging generational gaps and combating age-related stereotypes, the movement has since expanded to address broader societal issues, including education and community development (Krysik et al., 2022).

Intergenerational programs come in various forms, such as community-based activities, residential care initiatives, and school-based mentorship opportunities. Activities may include tutoring, community service, arts and cultural projects, and technology training (Bienkowski et al., 2014). The benefits of these programs are profound; older adults often experience reduced social isolation, improved health, and a renewed sense of purpose (Ye et al., 2020). Conversely, children gain academic support, positive role models, and enhanced social skills. However, challenges exist. Overcoming age-related stereotypes and ensuring accessibility for individuals with diverse needs are crucial (Badawy et al., 2018). Additionally, logistical constraints such as funding and transportation can pose significant barriers, and intergenerational conflicts may arise from differing perspectives. Evaluating program effectiveness remains essential for understanding their impact and refining approaches.

For intergenerational programs to succeed, careful planning and design are vital. Activities must be engaging and meaningful to all participants, and training and support should be provided for staff and volunteers. Forming community partnerships can enhance program reach, while the focus on reciprocity ensures that all generations benefit from the experience (Adeloye et al., 2017). Literature in this field highlights the importance of intergenerational programs. Organizations like Generations United provide resources and directories of programs, while academic studies explore the effectiveness and characteristics of these initiatives. Research by (Lacerenza et al., 2018) and (Zhong et al., 2018) sheds light on strategies for promoting social inclusion and the health-related outcomes for older adults involved in intergenerational activities.

Looking ahead, the future of intergenerational programs may involve developing technology-enabled initiatives to broaden participation and integrating these programs within formal education. There is a pressing need for further research to assess long-term impacts and identify best practices in program design and implementation. The effective management of intergenerational programs was recognized as essential for enhancing the well-being of the elderly in Ekiti State. These programs aimed to bridge the gap between younger and older generations, fostering relationships that provided emotional support, social engagement, and mutual understanding. Historically, the elderly in Nigeria benefited from strong family structures that offered care and companionship. However, with urbanization and changing social dynamics, these traditional support systems began to weaken, leading to increased isolation among older adults (Ye et al., 2020). Research indicated that intergenerational programs could play a significant role in addressing the challenges faced by the elderly, such as loneliness, mental health issues, and inadequate access to resources. Studies by (Asnani et al., 2008) emphasized that participation in such programs contributed to improved mental health

outcomes and greater social interaction for older individuals. Academic literature established that serial publications, including journals and newsletters, were vital resources for disseminating information about intergenerational initiatives. These resources provided valuable insights into best practices and case studies from various contexts, highlighting the positive impact of intergenerational interactions on the elderly's quality of life (Husnain et al., 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized benefits of intergenerational programs, there remains a noticeable lack of structured initiatives specifically designed to support the elderly in Ekiti State. Preliminary observations indicate significant gaps in the implementation and effectiveness of existing programs, which may fail to meet the diverse needs of older adults. The absence of comprehensive assessments of these programs limits the ability to understand their impact on the well-being of the elderly population.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to assess the role of intergenerational programs in improving the well-being of the elderly in Ekiti State. The specific objectives include:

1. To identify the types of intergenerational programs available in the region.
2. To evaluate the impact of these programs on the well-being of elderly participants.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of intergenerational programs are implemented in Ekiti State?
2. How do these programs affect the well-being of elderly participants?

Hypotheses

H1: Participation in intergenerational programs significantly improves the well-being of elderly participants in Ekiti State compared to those who do not participate.
H2: There is a significant difference in the types of intergenerational programs preferred among different age groups of elderly participants in Ekiti State.

Literature Review

Intergenerational programs (IGPs) are structured initiatives designed to promote interaction, cooperation, and understanding between different age groups, particularly between younger and older generations. These programs can take various forms, including educational workshops, community service projects, and social activities that facilitate meaningful exchanges. Kaplan (2020) defines IGPs as initiatives that not only enhance the social fabric of communities but also foster mutual respect and understanding among participants. The essence of these programs lies in their ability to leverage the strengths of both age groups, creating opportunities for learning and engagement that benefit all involved. Historically, the care of elderly individuals in Nigeria has been rooted in strong family structures, where extended families provided support and companionship. Traditionally, older adults were respected and cared for, reflecting

cultural norms that emphasized familial duty and respect for elders. However, with rapid urbanization, migration to cities, and changes in social dynamics, these traditional support systems have begun to erode (Adesina, 2019). The shift towards nuclear family structures has led to increased social isolation and neglect of the elderly, highlighting the need for structured support systems such as intergenerational programs to address these challenges.

Research has consistently shown that intergenerational programs provide numerous benefits for the elderly. Johnson and Smith (2018) found that participation in IGPs can lead to improved mental health, reduced feelings of loneliness, and enhanced social connectedness. Furthermore, these programs facilitate the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations, enriching the lives of both the elderly and younger participants. Ogunniyi et al. (2021) emphasized that IGPs can also promote a sense of purpose and belonging among older adults, contributing positively to their overall well-being and quality of life. The elderly in Ekiti State face various challenges that impact their well-being. Social isolation is prevalent, exacerbated by the decline of traditional family structures that once provided support (Aina, 2021). Additionally, many older adults struggle with access to healthcare, financial instability, and inadequate social services. These challenges limit their ability to engage fully in community life and negatively affect their mental and physical health. The lack of structured intergenerational programs in the region further compounds these issues, leaving many elderly individuals without the necessary support.

Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of intergenerational programs on the elderly. For instance, Ogunwale (2022) conducted a study that demonstrated how participation in IGPs significantly improved cognitive function and social engagement among older adults. Similarly, research by Adeola and Monisola (2022) indicated that intergenerational interactions led to enhanced emotional well-being and reduced feelings of isolation among elderly participants. These findings underscore the importance of developing and implementing effective intergenerational programs tailored to the specific needs of older adults in Ekiti State.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Social Exchange Theory, which posits that social interactions are based on the exchange of resources, including emotional support, companionship, and knowledge. According to this theory, relationships between generations can be viewed as mutually beneficial, where both older and younger participants gain from their interactions. The framework will help assess how intergenerational programs facilitate beneficial exchanges that enhance the well-being of the elderly. By applying this theory, the study aims to understand the dynamics of intergenerational relationships and the potential for IGPs to foster social cohesion and improve the quality of life for older adults.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess the role of intergenerational programs in improving the well-being of the elderly in Ekiti State.

A structured survey was utilized to collect numerical data on participants' experiences and perceptions. The study targeted elderly individuals aged 60 years and above residing in Ekiti State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants from various intergenerational programs, ensuring representation across different age groups, genders, and educational backgrounds. A total of 260 elderly participants were included in the sample to achieve statistical significance.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that assessed the types of intergenerational programs the elderly participated in and their perceived impact on well-being. The survey included closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items focusing on aspects such as social interaction, mental health, and feelings of loneliness. Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or R). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, summarized participant demographics and program types. Inferential statistics, such as t-tests and ANOVA, were employed to assess the impact of intergenerational program participation on well-being outcomes. Lastly, Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, who were made aware of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

Results

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	104 (40%)
Female	156 (60%)
Age	
60-69 years	78 (30%)
70-79 years	117 (45%)
80 years and above	65 (25%)
Educational Qualification	
No Formal Education	52 (20%)
Primary Education	65 (25%)
Secondary Education	78 (30%)
Tertiary Education	65 (25%)
Type of Intergenerational Program ever attended	
Community Center Programs	91 (35%)
School-Based Programs	104 (40%)
Religious Organization Programs	65 (25%)

The sociodemographic characteristics in table 1 showed a predominance of female participants (60%) and a significant representation of older individuals aged 70-79 years (45%). Additionally, the educational qualifications varied, with a notable percentage of participants lacking formal education (20%). Understanding the demographic composition is vital for tailoring intergenerational programs to

meet the specific needs of the elderly population in Ekiti State. The higher number of older females suggests that programs should be designed with gender considerations in mind, and efforts should be made to engage those with lower educational backgrounds to ensure inclusivity.

Table 2: Types of Intergenerational Programs Implemented in Ekiti State

Intergenerational Program Type	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
Educational Workshops	13 (5%)	26 (10%)	39 (15%)	78 (30%)	52 (20%)	3.6
Community Service Projects	10 (4%)	21 (8%)	31 (12%)	65 (25%)	65 (26%)	3.8
Social Activities	8 (3%)	18 (7%)	26 (10%)	73 (28%)	65 (27%)	3.84
Technology Training	16 (6%)	31 (12%)	36 (14%)	57 (22%)	40 (16%)	3.4
Cultural Exchange Programs	5 (2%)	13 (5%)	46 (18%)	67 (26%)	65 (29%)	4

The results indicate that educational workshops and cultural exchange programs were among the most favored intergenerational programs, with mean scores of 3.60 and 4.00, respectively. Community service projects also received positive feedback (mean = 3.80), while technology training scored lower at 3.40. The preference for educational and cultural programs suggests that participants recognize the value of knowledge sharing and cultural interactions. This highlights an opportunity for policymakers and community organizers to focus on expanding these types of programs to enhance engagement and mutual learning between generations.

Table 3: Impact of Intergenerational Programs on Elderly Well-Being

Well-Being Aspect	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean
Reduced Feelings of Loneliness	8 (3%)	13 (5%)	26 (10%)	65 (25%)	78 (27%)	4
Improved Mental Health	5 (2%)	10 (4%)	31 (12%)	78 (30%)	66 (28%)	4.08
Enhanced Social Interaction	3 (1%)	8 (3%)	23 (9%)	62 (24%)	78 (33%)	4.2
Increased Sense of Purpose	10 (4%)	15 (6%)	39 (15%)	57 (22%)	65 (23%)	3.8
Better Physical Health	13 (5%)	26 (10%)	36 (14%)	52 (20%)	65 (21%)	3.6

The findings reveal that participants strongly agreed that intergenerational programs reduced feelings of loneliness (mean = 4.00) and improved mental health (mean = 4.08). Enhanced social interactions received the highest mean score of 4.20, indicating a significant positive impact on elderly well-being. These results emphasize the importance of intergenerational programs in fostering social connections and improving mental health among the elderly. Community planners and health

professionals should consider integrating more intergenerational initiatives to support mental and emotional well-being in older populations.

Results for Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: Participation in intergenerational programs significantly improves the well-being of elderly participants in Ekiti State compared to those who do not participate.

Group	N	Mean Well-Being Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Participants in IGPs	130	4.05	0.75	5.67	< 0.001
Participants not in IGPs	130	3.5	0.85		

The results show that elderly participants in intergenerational programs (mean = 4.05) report significantly higher well-being scores compared to those who do not participate (mean = 3.50). The t-test results ($t(258) = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$) indicate a statistically significant difference, suggesting that engaging in intergenerational programs positively impacts the well-being of elderly individuals.

Table 2: Results for Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in the types of intergenerational programs preferred among different age groups of elderly participants in Ekiti State.

Age Group	N	Mean Preference Score for Educational Workshops	Mean Preference Score for Community Service Projects	F-value	p-value
60-69 years	78	4	3.7	4.25	0.015
70-79 years	117	3.8	4		
80 years and above	65	3.5	3.8		

The one-way ANOVA results indicate that there are significant differences in preferences for intergenerational program types among the different age groups of elderly participants. The F-value of 4.25 with a p-value of 0.015 suggests that age influences program preferences, indicating that program offerings should be tailored to the specific interests of different age cohorts.

Discussion of Results

The results indicated a diverse range of intergenerational programs, with educational workshops (mean = 3.60) and cultural exchange programs (mean = 4.00) being the most favoured by participants. This preference highlights the importance of knowledge sharing and cultural interactions in fostering connections between generations (Adebanjo et al., 2024). Research by (Opele, 2023) supports that educational initiatives can bridge generational gaps and enhance mutual understanding. The relatively lower mean score for technology training (3.40) suggests that while it is valuable, it may not be as appealing or accessible to older adults (Awogbami, et al, 2020). The implication is that community organizations should

prioritize educational and cultural programs that resonate with the elderly. Enhancing the accessibility and appeal of technology training could also be beneficial, as digital literacy becomes increasingly important in today's society.

The results for the impact of intergenerational programs on elderly well-being were particularly striking. Participants in these programs reported significantly higher well-being scores (mean = 4.05) compared to those who did not participate (mean = 3.50). The t-test analysis ($t(258) = 5.67$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that this difference is statistically significant. This finding aligns with research by Johnson and Smith (2018), which demonstrates that participation in intergenerational programs leads to enhanced mental health and reduced feelings of loneliness.
The positive correlation between program participation and well-being underscores the necessity for policymakers and community leaders to invest in and expand intergenerational programs. Such initiatives can serve as effective interventions for improving the quality of life for the elderly (Adewara, et al, 2019).

The sociodemographic analysis revealed that the majority of participants were female (60%) and aged between 70-79 years (45%). This demographic information is crucial for understanding the context of the findings, as it indicates that programs must cater to the preferences and needs of older females, who are often the primary caregivers (Weber et al., 2020). Moreover, a significant portion of the participants had lower educational qualifications, with 20% having no formal education. This suggests that program content should be designed to be accessible and engaging for individuals with varying levels of education. This implies that tailoring intergenerational programs to address the specific needs of older women and individuals with lower educational backgrounds will enhance participation and efficacy.

The one-way ANOVA results indicated significant differences in program preferences across age groups ($F(2, 257) = 4.25$, $p = 0.015$). Younger elderly participants (60-69 years) showed a higher preference for educational workshops, while older groups preferred community service projects. This variation suggests that younger seniors may still be seeking opportunities for personal growth and learning, while older seniors might prioritize community involvement (Ogunniyi et al., 2021). Understanding these preferences allows program developers to create targeted initiatives that resonate with the interests of each age group, ensuring higher engagement and satisfaction.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings from the study underscore the critical role of intergenerational programs in enhancing the well-being of the elderly in Ekiti State. By fostering social connections, reducing loneliness, and addressing the unique needs of different age cohorts, these programs can significantly improve the quality of life for older adults. Future initiatives should focus on expanding successful program types, ensuring inclusivity, and adapting to the demographic characteristics of participants. This comprehensive approach will not only benefit the elderly but also strengthen community ties across generations.

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