



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF BOREDOM AMONGST OLDER ADULTS IN UGBOWO COMMUNITY, BENIN CITY, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of boredom among older adults in Ugbowo Community, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Although the global population of older persons is expanding rapidly (United Nations, 2022), boredom remains an under-researched dimension of ageing despite its documented links to loneliness, depression, and declining quality of life (Eastwood et al., 2012; Fahlman, Mercer-Lynn, Flora, & Eastwood, 2019). Guided by Activity Theory (Havighurst, 1961) and Disengagement Theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961), the study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised an estimated 1,104 older adults aged 60 years and above resident in Ugbowo Community, from which a sample of 294 respondents was drawn using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula. Structured questionnaires were administered face-to-face to accommodate respondents with low literacy levels, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that boredom was highly prevalent, with the majority of respondents (68.7%) reporting frequent boredom. Lack of social interaction, retirement or unemployment, bereavement, health limitations, and inadequate recreational facilities emerged as the principal causes, while loneliness, depressive feelings, reduced mental alertness, and diminished physical activity were identified as the most significant effects. Respondents coped mainly through religious participation, media use, visiting, and small-scale economic activity, while access to organised welfare services remained limited. The study concludes that boredom constitutes a significant psychosocial risk for older adults in Ugbowo and recommends community-based recreational programming, strengthened social welfare provision, and the active involvement of social workers in elderly care.

Keywords: Boredom, older adults, social isolation, emotional well-being, social work intervention.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Boredom, though commonly conceptualized as a trivial or fleeting emotional state, has increasingly been recognized as a convoluted psychosocial experience with significant implications for ageing, mental health, and overall quality of life (Fahlman et al 2019; Eastwood et al 2012). While early research on boredom concentrated largely on adolescents because of its association with risk-taking behaviour, far less attention has been given to how boredom manifests among older adults, despite indications that it can substantially affect well-being in later life (Eastwood et al., 2012).

The limited body of existing research suggests that boredom among older persons is closely intertwined with broader psychosocial challenges, including social isolation, loneliness, and diminished participation in leisure activities. These conditions tend to intensify during major life transitions such as retirement, widowhood, or declining mobility, all of which can shrink social networks and reduce opportunities for meaningful engagement (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). As traditional family and community support systems in many societies weaken under the pressures of globalization, urbanisation and migration. Older adults are increasingly left with unstructured time and inadequate stimulation, conditions that heighten vulnerability to chronic boredom.

Across Africa, including Nigeria, rapid globalization, urbanisation, economic hardship, and the migration of younger relatives to urban centres have gradually eroded the extended family systems that once ensured older persons remained socially engaged and valued within their communities (Bai, Lai, & Guo, 2020). Within Nigerian society specifically, the transition toward more individualistic urban lifestyles has left many older adults socially disengaged, lonely, and under-stimulated, with consequences for their psychological and physical health (Okoye, 2021; Ogunbameru & Rotimi, 2022).

In Ugbowo Community, Benin City, Edo State, a semi-urban area comprising university neighbourhoods with traditional residential settlements, rapid social and demographic change has reshaped the structures that once supported older residents. Reduced intergenerational contact, limited age-friendly recreational infrastructure, and the gradual decline of communal caregiving practices have left many elderly residents socially isolated and prone to prolonged boredom. Despite the seriousness of these dynamics, boredom among older adults in Nigerian communities such as Ugbowo has received little empirical attention, creating a gap that this study sought to address through community-based, evidence-driven inquiry.

Geriatric discourse and policy in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, continue to be dominated by physical health concerns, with comparatively little attention paid to the psychosocial dimensions of ageing such as boredom (Ogunbameru & Rotimi, 2022). Yet boredom, left unaddressed, has been associated internationally with loneliness, depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation among older populations (Bai, Lai, & Guo, 2020). In Ugbowo Community specifically, anecdotal and observational evidence suggests that many older residents experience prolonged states of social withdrawal and disengagement that are frequently misread or dismissed by family caregivers and health workers who lack awareness of boredom's psychological weight. The absence of empirical, community-level research on this issue limits the capacity of social workers, policymakers, and families to design appropriate interventions, thereby motivating the present study.



1.1. Objectives of the Study

The study sought to: (i) determine the prevalence of boredom among older adults in Ugbowo Community; (ii) identify the causes of boredom among this population; (iii) examine the effects of boredom on the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of older adults; (iv) explore the coping mechanisms older adults adopt in response to boredom; and (v) assess the role of social work in mitigating boredom and enhancing quality of life among older adults in Ugbowo Community.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Boredom is conceptualised as a psychological and social state characterised by restlessness, weariness, and a perceived lack of meaningful stimulation, arising when an individual's needs for purpose, autonomy, and social connection remain unmet (Eastwood et al., 2012). The Multidimensional State Boredom Scale developed by Fahlman, Mercer-Lynn, Flora, and Eastwood (2019) operationalises boredom along dimensions of disengagement, high arousal, low arousal, inattention, and time perception, underscoring that boredom is not merely idleness but a distinct affective experience with measurable correlates.

Among older adults, boredom is frequently linked to the loss of social roles attendant on retirement, bereavement, and declining physical capacity (Havighurst, 1961). Cacioppo and Cacioppo's (2018) evolutionary theory of loneliness situates social disconnection as a biologically salient threat signal, suggesting that the unmet need for belonging which underlies loneliness may also be a central driver of boredom in later life. Where social networks contract, as commonly occurs with widowhood or the migration of adult children, older persons lose both companionship and the structured social roles that previously organised their time and sense of purpose.

In the African context, the erosion of traditional extended-family and communal support systems under pressures of urbanisation, labour migration, and economic hardship has been widely documented as a force that increasingly isolates older adults from the social roles, such as advisers, custodians of culture, and caregivers, that earlier sustained their engagement (Bai, Lai, & Guo, 2020). Within Nigeria, the situation is compounded by weak pension coverage, limited geriatric health services, and inadequate social welfare structures, leaving many older adults economically insecure and socially marginalised (Okoye, 2021). Ogunbameru and Rotimi (2022), examining social support and psychological well-being among older persons in Nigerian urban communities, found that limited social support correlated strongly with poorer psychological outcomes, lending support to the proposition that under-engagement, of which boredom is a manifestation, undermines well-being in later life.

The Activity Theory of ageing (Havighurst, 1961) holds that successful ageing depends on sustained social engagement and the substitution of new roles and activities for those lost through retirement or bereavement; from this perspective, boredom signals a failure of this substitution process. By contrast, the Disengagement Theory advanced by Cumming and Henry (1961) frames gradual withdrawal from social roles as a normal and even functional feature of ageing, implying that some reduction in activity is expected, but cautions that withdrawal which is not accompanied by adequate psychosocial support can tip into harmful isolation and boredom. Read together, these theories suggest that boredom among older adults arises not from disengagement itself but from disengagement that lacks



meaningful replacement, an outcome made more likely where, as in Ugbowo Community, age-friendly social infrastructure and organised community programming remain scarce.

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates that boredom among older adults is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of psychological need, social role loss, and structural conditions of community support. This provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the present study's investigation of boredom's prevalence, causes, effects, and management among older adults in Ugbowo Community.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, appropriate for systematically capturing the prevalence, causes, effects, and coping mechanisms associated with boredom among older adults in Ugbowo Community, Benin City, Edo State. The population of the study comprised older adults aged 60 years and above resident in Ugbowo Community. Based on population projections for Edo State derived from the National Population Commission's census-based estimates (National Population Commission, 2023) and the commonly applied demographic estimate that older adults constitute approximately 6 to 7 percent of the Nigerian population, the population of older adults in Ugbowo Community was estimated at 1,104 persons.

Using Taro Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination, $n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$, with $N = 1,104$ and a precision level (e) of 0.05 at a 95% confidence level, a sample size of approximately 294 respondents was derived and adopted for the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising sections on socio-demographic characteristics, prevalence of boredom, causes of boredom, effects on well-being, coping mechanisms, and the perceived role of social work. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face by the researcher with the assistance of a trained research assistant, a method chosen to accommodate respondents with low literacy levels. Instrument validity was established through expert review by specialists in social work and gerontology, while reliability was assessed through a pilot study conducted outside the study area, with internal consistency evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process.

4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Presentation of Results

Assessment of the Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Of the 294 respondents, the largest age group was 60–69 years (46.6 percent), followed by 70–79 years (34.0 percent) and 80 years and above (19.4 percent). Females constituted a slight majority (55.1 percent) compared with males (44.9 percent). Regarding marital status, the largest proportion were widowed (41.5 percent), followed by married respondents (36.4 percent), divorced or separated (14.3 percent), and single respondents (7.8 percent). In terms of educational attainment, 38.8 percent had no formal education, 29.6 percent had primary education, and 10.5 percent had attained tertiary education, indicating that the majority of respondents had low levels of formal schooling.

**Table 1: Analysis of Demographic Attributes of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	60–69 years	137	46.6
	70–79 years	100	34.0
	80 years and above	57	19.4
Gender	Male	132	44.9
	Female	162	55.1
Marital Status	Married	107	36.4
	Widowed	122	41.5
	Divorced/Separated	42	14.3
	Single	23	7.8
Educational Level	No formal education	114	38.8
	Primary education	87	29.6
	Secondary education	62	21.1
	Tertiary education	31	10.5

Field Survey, (2026)

Assessment of the Prevalence of Boredom

A large majority of respondents (68.7 percent) reported experiencing boredom often, while 21.4% reported experiencing it sometimes, and only 9.9 percent reported rarely experiencing it. This indicates that boredom is a widespread and frequent experience among older adults in the study area.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the Prevalence of Boredom in the Study

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Often	202	68.7
Sometimes	63	21.4
Rarely	29	9.9
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey, (2026).

Evaluation of the Causes of Boredom

Lack of social interaction was identified as the most common cause of boredom (72.4 percent), followed by retirement or unemployment (64.6 percent), loss of spouse or friends (58.8 percent), physical health limitations (55.1 percent), lack of recreational facilities (49.0 percent), and financial constraints (42.2 percent).

Table 3: Analysis of the Causes of Boredom among Older Adults

Cause	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of social interaction	213	72.4
Retirement/unemployment	190	64.6
Loss of spouse/friends	173	58.8
Physical health limitations	162	55.1
Lack of recreational facilities	144	49.0
Financial constraints	124	42.2

Source: Field Survey (2026).

**Determination of the Effects of Boredom on Well-Being**

Boredom was reported to produce feelings of loneliness in 70.1 percent of respondents, depression or sadness in 62.9 percent, loss of interest in activities in 57.5 percent, reduced mental alertness in 48.6 percent, and poor physical activity levels in 44.2 percent, confirming boredom's substantial impact on both emotional and physical health.

Table 4: Analysis of the Effects of Boredom on Older Adults' Well-being

Effect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Feelings of loneliness	206	70.1
Depression/sadness	185	62.9
Loss of interest in activities	169	57.5
Reduced mental alertness	143	48.6
Poor physical activity	130	44.2

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Comparative Assessment of the Coping Mechanisms

Religious activities were the most widely adopted coping strategy (74.8 percent), followed by watching television or listening to the radio (63.6 percent), visiting friends or neighbours (51.7 percent), household chores or small trading (47.3 percent), and participation in organised community programmes (29.9 percent). The relatively low uptake of structured community programmes points to a gap in organized social support available to older residents.

Table 5: Analysis of the Coping Strategies for Boredom

Coping Mechanism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Religious activities	220	74.8
Watching TV/listening to radio	187	63.6
Visiting friends/ neighbours	152	51.7
Household chores/small trading	139	47.3
Community programmes	88	29.9

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Access to Social Welfare Services and Perceived Role of Social Workers

Most respondents (68.0 percent) reported having no access to social welfare services, while only 32.0 percent indicated that they did. Despite this gap in service access, a substantial majority believed social workers have an important role to play in reducing boredom: 52.7 percent strongly agreed and 25.9 percent agreed that social workers could contribute meaningfully through counselling, social engagement programmes, and advocacy, while a smaller proportion disagreed (13.3 percent) or strongly disagreed (8.1 percent).

Table 6: Analysis Access to Social Welfare Services

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes (has access)	94	32.0
No (no access)	200	68.0
Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey, (2026).



4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that boredom is a highly prevalent and consequential experience among older adults in Ugbowo Community, consistent with the broader literature identifying boredom as an under-recognised but significant psychosocial risk in later life (Eastwood et al., 2012; Fahlman, Mercer-Lynn, Flora, & Eastwood, 2019). The prominence of lack of social interaction, retirement, and bereavement as causes of boredom mirrors patterns documented in studies on social isolation and loneliness among older Nigerians and other African populations, where the erosion of communal and extended-family support structures has progressively narrowed older adults' social worlds (Okoye, 2021; Bai, Lai, & Guo, 2020).

That boredom in this study was strongly associated with loneliness and depressive feelings lends support to Cacioppo and Cacioppo's (2018) account of social disconnection as a state that the individual experiences as aversive and destabilising, reinforcing the view that boredom and loneliness, while conceptually distinct, are closely entwined in the lived experience of socially under-engaged older adults. Read through the lens of Activity Theory (Havighurst, 1961), the comparatively low uptake of organized community programmes (29.9%) alongside heavy reliance on religious participation and media consumption suggests that older adults in Ugbowo are managing the loss of prior social roles largely through informal, individually initiated means rather than through structured substitute activities, a pattern that Disengagement Theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) would characterize as withdrawal occurring without adequate compensatory support.

The finding that a majority of respondents lacked access to social welfare services, despite widespread recognition of social work's potential value, echoes concerns raised by Ogunbameru and Rotimi (2022) regarding the gap between the psychosocial needs of older Nigerians and the institutional capacity to meet them. This gap is particularly significant in a semi-urban setting like Ugbowo, where university-driven urbanization has not been matched by commensurate investment in age-friendly social infrastructure.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that boredom among older adults in Ugbowo Community is a widespread and serious psychosocial issue, driven primarily by social isolation, retirement, bereavement, health limitations, and inadequate recreational infrastructure, and carrying significant consequences for emotional and physical well-being. While older adults in the community have developed personal coping strategies, these remain largely informal and are not substitutes for organized institutional support, which continues to be inaccessible to the majority of the population studied.

5.2. Recommendations

Arising from these findings, the study recommends that: (i) community-based organizations and local authorities establish regular social and recreational programmes targeted at older residents; (ii) government and relevant agencies expand social welfare outreach and establish accessible community centres for older adults; (iii) age-friendly recreational facilities be developed within the community;



(iv) programmes supporting small-scale income-generating activity for older adults be introduced to ease financial constraints that limit social participation; (v) social workers be actively engaged in designing and delivering counselling, support groups, and community mobilization initiatives targeted at the elderly; and (vi) families be encouraged to sustain regular interaction and emotional support for their older members. Future research should examine urban–rural differences in the experience of boredom among older adults, track its long-term health effects longitudinally, and evaluate the effectiveness of specific intervention programmes designed to address it.

Artificial Intelligent (AI) Statement

The author acknowledges the use of AI technologies such as ChatGPT (Open AI) to assist with grammar checking, language refinement, reference formatting of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

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