

Colonialism and Erosion of Indigenous Extended Family Support Systems for Elderly Care in Idunmwowina community Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria**Emike Selina Igbafe Agbontaen & Osagie Uyi Agbontaen**

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selina.igbaf@uniben.edu; auprinceuyiosa@yahoo.com**Abstract**

Nigeria's traditional family structure, which served as the foundation for the country's native communal shelter and elderly care systems, have been altered by the colonial reforms of Nigerian societal organisations. This study examined the nature of traditional extended family support systems for elderly individuals and explores how colonialism and urban migration have transformed native patterns of caregiving and intergenerational care system. In order to fully comprehend older people's perspectives and experiences with the evolution of supportive family networks, the paper used a qualitative research approach. 50 respondents were sampled consisting of 35 participants who were involved in in-depth interviews, 12 participants who participated in focus group discussions, and 3 key informants, including a chief and two chief makers, all of whom were at least 60 years old and older. Thematic analysis of the data was done, and the study topic was explained using disengagement theory. The results showed that prior to colonialism, older people had esteemed roles in the family and community and benefited from considerable group assistance via the family unit structure. The study also discovered that colonization had a major impact on family disintegration, rural-urban migration, diminishing kinship relationships, and rising individualistic behaviour, all of which decreased family caregiving responsibilities. Thus, colonialists undermined support networks for senior citizens in the Ovia North-East Local Government Area and altered indigenous African familial structures. Better social protection services, a resurgence of neighborhood values, local-based senior support networks, and greater family accountability for aging parents were all suggested by the research.

Keywords: Colonialism, Indigenous, Family, Support, Elderly**INTRODUCTION**

Considering the rising number of aged people and the evolving social support structures in many civilizations, aging is a global social issue that has received academic interest. Since grandparents were seen as guardians of ancient tradition, customs, morals, and ancestral knowledge, older people in African civilisations, especially Nigeria, have historically held esteemed responsibilities among families and that is why Older adults got mental, financial, material, and physical support from children, loved ones, and neighbors via the customary African kinship system, which functioned as the primary welfare system institution. (Togonu-Bickersteth, 1988). Older individuals were essential to family decision-making, conflict settlement, childrearing, indigenous governance, and preserving cultural heritage among the Edo people of modern day Edo

State. It was believed that taking care of elderly parents was a moral and cultural duty that was based on family cooperation and shared living. Since caregiving duties stretched across the nuclear household to the larger kinship network, older people never faced neglect or desertion. (Apt, 2012). As a result, traditional family arrangements guaranteed elderly people in communities' social participation, respect, and quality of life for older adults.

In contrast, the advent of colonialism triggered profound cultural and socioeconomic changes that profoundly changed native African social structures. Foreign education, Christian doctrine, urban growth, industrialisation, and paid employment systems were all brought about by colonial rule, which undermined communal living and encouraged individualistic lives (Shizha & Charema, 2008). Foreign education, Christian doctrine, urban growth, industrialisation, and paid employment systems were all brought about by colonial rule, which undermined communal living and encouraged individualistic lives (Shizha & Charema, 2008). Parents who are elderly and who stayed in rural locations received less assistance and family interaction as a result of young people moving from rural to metropolitan areas in quest of western education and work prospects (Wahab, 2013). The steady deterioration of traditional authority institutions and family caregiver processes, which historically ensured support for older adults, was also influenced by the advent of Western values. As nuclear families progressively supplanted extended household units, urbanisation accelerated the deterioration of traditional family support networks. In light of deteriorating familial support networks, reports show that many older people in Nigeria now face impoverishment, abandonment, psychological isolation, and inadequate medical care (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022). Older people are highly valued in African culture, and the value established stability, identity, and how everyone is cared for, especially the older adults. According to Shizha and Charema (2008), the extended family structure that provides care is characterised by the African values of brotherhood for every individual of the family and community.

According to Olikeyi (2001), one of the characteristics of Africans is their kind nature or courtesy, which involves giving generously without any exchange in return. People in Africa are willing to help, support, love, and bear each other's burdens without necessarily doing so for financial gain or reward (Kaun, 2010). This generosity was eroded by the adoption of Christian doctrine, urban development, forced labour migration, and enslavement by the colonial master, which shattered African family unity and allowed for the birth of individualism (Shizha & Charema, 2008).

Okakah *et al* (2025), argued that the vulnerability of the older adults in many Nigerian communities has been greatly influenced by these changes. Atumah & Alfa (2019), argue that changes such as forced labour migration, the cash economy, demographic change, formal education and westernization have occurred and weakened the extended family structure, leading to a reduction in the frequency of contact with relatives and encouraged social and economic dependence, possession is perceived as personal property and no longer belong to the extended family. Few research projects have objectively investigated how colonialism directly changed established family support structures in Idunmwowina community in Benin City, Edo State, despite increased scholarly focus on aging and aged welfare. Thus, this research explores how colonialism affected the traditional family support networks for older adults in the research location.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria research have been conducted on family welfare and assistance for the elderly to better understand the impact of neglect and decline in traditional family care for the elderly (Akinyemi, 2005; Eboiyehi, 2008). However, few studies have been conducted on qualitative analysis of the disruptions in the indigenous family care support system due to colonial influence. African communities have historically upheld robust extended family and communal structures that ensured older adults received proper support, safety, and social involvement. The children, extended family, and neighbors all combined to give caregiving duties with the elderly, who were revered as stewards of knowledge and tradition. (Togonu-Bickersteth, 1988). In contrast, the introduction of colonial economic institutions like Western education, urban development, and the slave trade system, colonialism disrupted the indigenous family care system for the elderly. The social family care relationships that depended on younger folks to offer daily routines, material, and monetary assistance for the elderly were undermined as a result of the enormous out-migration of young people (Apt, and Greico 1994). The colonial period created a redirection and concentration on focusing on profitable crops and metropolitan manufacturing centers and as a result, youthful adults were compelled to leave rural communities, which eliminated the traditional family care system and left older adults struggling to survive alone (Ezekiel & Gin, 2025). Due to the severe deterioration of traditional family support networks, many older people in modern day Nigeria are faced with hardship, lonely lives, emotional abandonment, poor health services, and psychological abuse. Migration from countryside to metropolitan areas has split apart

children from aging parents who live in rural areas without proper psychological and physical assistance (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022).

Grandparents were granted the power by indigenous traditional systems to serve as counselors, cultural stewards, and dispute resolvers. By establishing consolidated administrative structures and promoting a more youthful, European schooling setting, colonial governments weakened such authority (Turshen, 1977). The arrival of colonial capitalism facilitated a change from indigenous family lifestyles to European nuclear family patterns, and this undermined the common social obligation regarding the elderly, which frequently put them in extreme impoverishment (Aboderin, 2004). The idea of official care for the aged (elderly people's homes) was brought about by colonial and post-colonial forces. Because socialism and the idea of unity traditionally indicated that caring for others took place naturally amongst indigenous families' values, this was completely in conflict with customary African beliefs (Tanyi *et al.*, 2018). Notwithstanding these increasing difficulties faced by older adults, only few qualitative research studies have explicitly looked at the connection between colonialism and the deterioration of local customary support networks for senior citizens. Therefore, by analyzing how colonization eroded traditional family support systems for senior citizens in Idunmwowina community in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, this study aims to close this gap.

In contrast, by introducing foreign education, Christian doctrine, urban development, *industrialisation*, and paid labor, colonisation altered established traditional systems, weakening social cohesion and encouraging individualism behaviours (Wahab, 2013). Due to the severe deterioration of traditional family support networks, many older people in modern day Nigeria face poverty, lonely lives, emotional abandonment, poor health services, and psychological abuse. Migration from countryside to metropolitan areas has split apart children from aging parents who live in rural areas without proper psychological and physical assistance (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022). Elder maltreatment and abandonment are on the rise in Edo State, according to additional studies. According to Okakah *et al.*, (2025), emotional neglect and financial neglect are probably the highest prevalent issues, with 79.3% of older people in rural regions reporting some sort of abuse or neglect. Aging people in the Ovia North-East Local Government Area are becoming more vulnerable as a result regarding financial difficulties, migration, and deteriorating family assistance networks. Notwithstanding these increasing difficulties, few qualitative research studies have

explicitly looked at the connection between colonialism and the deterioration of local customary support networks for senior citizens. Therefore, by analysing how colonisation changed traditional family support systems for senior citizens in Ovia North-East Local Government Area, this study aims to close this gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Increasing societal change and deteriorating family support networks have made the topic of aging and older adult well-being a significant topic in sociology, social work, and gerontological research. African communities have always upheld strong family structures and communal living, which ensured care for seniors and inclusion in society. According to Togonu-Bickersteth (1988), older individuals were regarded as guardians of knowledge, customs, and moral principles, and providing care was seen as a shared duty with strong roots in kinship unity. Nevertheless, through foreign education, commerce, urban growth, and immigration, colonialism and industrialisation profoundly altered African family structures. These modifications undermined social norms and led to the deterioration of family support networks for senior citizens (Aboderin, 2004). According to recent research, deteriorating familial ties and financial difficulty are contributing to an increase in older adult maltreatment, impoverishment, psychological isolation, and insufficient medical care among Nigeria's older population (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022). Hence, indigenous African family support networks and the effects of colonialism on elder care in Nigeria are examined in this research study.

Traditional African Family Support Systems and Elderly Care

Large, broad family structures were upheld in traditional African communities, providing care for older people via kinship solidarity and group assistance. Because they were guardians of tradition, morals, values, norms, and ancestral wisdom, elderly people held esteemed roles (Apt, 2012). While neglecting older adults was socially unacceptable, taking care of aging parents was seen as a traditional duty. In Idunmwowina community older people actively engaged in customary governing practices, family decision-making, childrearing, and settling of disputes. According to Olikenyi (2001), one of the characteristics of Africans is their kind nature or courtesy, which involves giving generously without any exchange in return. People in Africa are willing to help, support, love, and bear each other's burdens without necessarily doing so for financial gain or reward (Kaun, 2010). Aged parents, children, nieces, nephews, and relatives from one's own

family as well as in-laws make up the extended African family system, which emphasises "growing up together" and "collective connection amongst children/relatives" (Makone, 2006). The African traditional family and community based solidarity permeated every facet of social life, and the family structure did not allow for poverty, neglect of any family member, or a safe approach in handling social concerns. (Chilisa, 2012). For older adults, the kinship unit offered accommodation, meals, company, and psychological care (Togonu-Bickersteth, 1988). According to research, familial assistance has historically served as Nigeria's primary social safety net system for older adults (Alwajud-Adewusi, 2020). Shizha and Charema (2008) argue that colonialism undermined collective unity by eroding the cultural values of the colonized, which emphasised the bonds and relationships among people. However, the influence of colonialism had a negative impact on the communal, physiological, mental, and cognitive wellness of every member of the traditional extended family, especially the old, and has put immense pressure on this brilliant structure (Shizha & Charema, 2008).

Colonialism, Modernisation, and the Decline of Elderly Support Systems

Aged parents, children, nieces, nephews, and relatives from one's own family as well as in-laws make up the extended African family system, which emphasises "growing up together" and "collective connection amongst children/relatives" (Makone, 2006). The African traditional family system and community based solidarity permeated every facet of social life, and the family structure did not allow for poverty, neglect of any family member, but it's a safe approach in handling social concerns (Chilisa, 2012). However, the influence of colonialism had a negative impact on the communal, physiological, mental, and cognitive wellness of every member of the traditional extended family, especially the old, and has put immense pressure on this brilliant structure (Shizha & Charema, 2008). Regard for elderly and authoritative figures was seen in Nigeria communities and Africa as a crucial instrument for fostering harmonious social relationships. Respect for older adults has a direct effect on maintaining the head of the family, locality, or neighborhood, which is why customs and traditions exist. Such regard was broken by emigration, independence, slave trade activities, colonial restrictions, etc., requiring older people to be responsible for taking care of themselves alone without younger relatives or family assistance, and this whole notion was progressively eroded (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006).

Older people are highly valued in African culture, and the value established stability, identity, and how everyone is cared for, especially the older adults. According to Shizha and Charema (2008), the extended family structure that provides care is characterised by the African values of brotherhood for every individual of the family and community. According to Olikenyi (2001), one of the characteristics of Africans is their kind nature or courtesy, which involves giving generously without any exchange in return. People in Africa are willing to help, support, love, and bear each other's burdens without necessarily doing so for financial gain or reward (Kaun, 2010). This generosity was eroded by the adoption of Christian doctrine, urban development, forced labour migration, and enslavement by the colonial master, which shattered African family unity and allowed for the birth of individualism (Shizha & Charema, 2008). These modifications damaged multigenerational living patterns and promoted migration from rural to metropolitan areas (Wahab, 2013). European individualistic principles were widely embraced by younger demographics, which decreased the community's need to care for the older people. Aged vulnerability and the deterioration of familial relationships were further consequences of industrialisation. Due to the inability of families to offer sufficient support, many older people now face abandonment, mental loneliness, hardship, and inadequate medical care (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022). According to findings done in Edo State, declining family structures and financial difficulty are associated with an increase in elderly misconduct and neglected incidents (Okakah *et al.*, 2025). As a result, colonisation and urbanisation played a major role in the demise of Nigeria's traditional familial care networks for older adults.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Disengagement Theory

The Disengagement Theory, created by Elaine Cumming and William Henry in 1961, serves as the foundation for this investigation. According to the theory, aging is a slow process that causes older people to retreat; they withdraw from social activities and contacts while society at the same time lowers its demands and obligations to them (Mobolaji & Akinyemi, 2022). The hypothesis states that people naturally become disengaged when their physical well-being declines, they retire from their jobs, they participate less in social activities, and their connections with others deteriorate. In order to preserve institutional consistency and stability, societies also progressively delegate authority and duties from an aged to a youthful generation (Cumming & Henry, 1961).

Disengagement theory offers substantial perspectives into older people's life experiences from a social work standpoint, especially in societies that are rapidly changing. According to the hypothesis, older people can suffer social marginalisation as a result of both biological aging and societal structural and historic shifts. According to Achenbaum and Bengtson (1994), colonisation and modernity weakened traditional family structures and diminished the social significance of older people, which increased the disengagement process across numerous African countries. Elderly people held important roles in family and community systems in African communities prior to colonisation. They were revered as stewards of knowledge, morals, tradition, and native authority. Older adults took part in customary administration, childrearing, settling disputes, and preserving culture, values, and norms among the Edo people. According to Togonu-Bickersteth (1988), the extended family system guaranteed ongoing communication and assistance between older people and youthful generations.

However, the introduction of Western education, urbanisation, capitalistic Christian doctrine, and paid labor systems brought forth by colonisation undermined kinship connection and community living. In pursuit of jobs and schooling, youths were moving from village to urban environments at a rapid rate, which decreased their relationship with older relatives who stayed in the villages (Wahab, 2013). Aging people's lonely lives, experiences of psychological neglect, dwindling family care, and social disengagement were all impacted by this exodus. Therefore, the progressive isolation of senior people in Idunmwowina community in Benin City, Edo state can be explained by disengagement theory as a result of colonialism and industrialisation. Due to deteriorating family support networks, older people are increasingly experiencing decreased involvement in family affairs, diminishing responsibilities, emotional abandonment, and loneliness. In order to safeguard senior citizens in modern Idunmwowina community in Benin City, Edo state society, the theory also emphasises the welfare consequences of aging and the necessity of more robust social support networks.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a qualitative research approach to investigate how colonial activities affected the traditional family support networks for older adults in Edo State's Ovia North-East Local Government Area. In order to fully comprehend older people's perspectives and experiences with the evolution of supportive family networks, the paper used a qualitative research approach. The

sample size of 50 respondents consisted of 35 participants who were involved in in-depth interviews, 12 participants who participated in focus group discussions, and 3 key informants, including a chief and two chief makers, who were interviewed, all of whom were at least 60 years old and older. Respondents with sufficient information on colonialism changes and conventional family structures were chosen using the purposeful sampling technique. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and key informant interviews with open-ended interview guides were used to gather data. The information gathered from the field was subjected to a thematic analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	72
	Female	14	28
	Total	50	100
Age of Respondents	60 - 69years	28	56
	70 – 79years	16	32
	80+	6	12
	Total	50	100
Marital Status	Single	1	2
	Married	23	66
	Divorced	4	8
	Widowed	11	12
	Total	50	100
Religion	Christianity	21	42
	Islam	12	24
	African Tradition	11	22
	Others	6	12
	Total	50	100
Family Type	Nuclear Family	36	72
	Extended Family	14	28
	Total	50	100

Source: fieldwork Feb-March, 2026

The aforementioned table shows that the majority of respondents 72.0% are men, while the proportion of women 28.0%. Additionally, the table shows that the majority of respondents 56.0% are between the ages of 60 and 32.0% are between the ages of 70 and 79; and 12.0% are between the ages of 80 years. The table also reveals that 66.0% of respondents are married, 12.0% are widows or widowers, 2.0% are single, and 8.0% are divorced. The aforementioned table also

shows that of the 50 respondents, 21 (42%) are Christians, 12 (22%) are Muslims, 11 (10.0%) are African traditional worshipers, and 6 (12%) are members of other religions. The chart also shows that 36 respondents (72%) are from nuclear families while 14 (28.0) are from extended family.

1. Who cared for the elderly in pre-colonial society?

One of the respondents who is a chief said:

In the old days, the care of our older parents was done collectively by children, grandchildren, and other relatives, including n neighbors and friends. (KII 1, 7/5/2026)

Another respondent a focus group discussion said:

In the old days, an elder person was never alone because of the children in the family were all around them”. (FGD 1, 10/5/2026)

Ah then you cannot neglect your old parent even those who do not have children were taking care of by everyone in the kingship family. (FGD 1, 10/5/2026)

In furtherance to the above another respondent said:

In the Benin culture leave your parents alone because it is the children and if they fail to give care to older parents their own children will do the same to them because it is belief in our culture that every child belongs to grandma and grandpa”. (KII 2, 7-5-2026)

Another respondent, a 68-year old male adult, added:

In our culture, it is a taboo not to take care of your elderly parents or to neglect your aged parents. It is expected that all their children, including their grandchildren, will come together to take good care of them by preparing the food their aged parents like, just to make them happy, make their bed, wash their clothes, take them out for a walk, and give them money. All these are done to make them comfortable, happy, and well cared for.” (KII 3, 10/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 66-year old male, said:

The old people were highly respected; everybody in the community will greet an elder anywhere you see them. Young people used to help elders carry their bags and loads, while children and

loved ones would assist them in getting water and cooking, but such assistance is no longer the case today. (FGD 1, 10/5/2026).

Another respondent, a 61-year old male, said:

Aged parents were then respected because they were seen as authorities; they settled disputes, and sometimes their words were final. (FGD 2, 10/5/2026).

Another respondent, a 60-year old male, said:

The aged were respected and loved because of their wealth of knowledge in the culture and traditions of our land. The elderly served as our community's leaders, and the majority of them were adept at handling difficult situations or resolving conflicts between families and other community members. (IDI 4, 7/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 62-year old female, said:

Yes, our grandparents were highly respected, and children loved them because of their deep knowledge in storytelling and their experience about our history, rules, customs, and traditions. The old were highly protected and taken care of by every member of the family (IDI 10, 10/5/2026)

Another respondent said:

Everyone in the village liked, respected, and took care of the elderly. Most of the time, family members and community members give some of them gifts like food, fruits, meats, and occasionally clothing. (IDI 1, 10/5/2026)

Another respondent in an interview, who was 73years old, said:

Then grandchildren will fetch water, fire wood, wash clothes for grandpa and grandma; the women will cook for them while we the younger men will go to the farm get food and hunting for animals our grandparents just relax because they have done theirs for the children so it time for them to enjoy the rewards of their labor. (IDI, 8, 10/5/2026)

This can also be linked to the statements by Togonu-Bickersteth, (1988), who said that older people in African civilizations, especially Nigeria, have historically held esteemed responsibilities among families and community's older adults got mental, financial, material, and

physical support from children, loved ones, and neighbors via the customary African kinship system, which functioned as the primary welfare system institution. (Togonu-Bickersteth, 1988).

2. How do elderly people in Idunmwowina Community perceive the impact of colonialism on indigenous extended family support systems for their care and well-being?

A respondent, who is a 76-year old female, said:

When we were growing up as a young boy, everybody within the extended family take care of their aged people. But when the colonialist came they stole able young girls, boys, youths and young adult's way to work for the in cities, and our aged parents where left alone. I believed the British system of rule changed our extended traditional family system structure. (IDI 14, 11/5/2026)

A respondent who is a chief maker explained:

Able family members who should have taken care of their elderly parents, were faced to do labor jobs and some young people were also taken overseas as slaves and this affected the village family structure because older parents were abandoned to take care of themselves alone and as a result of this children started living separate form their older parents instead of collective family living. (KII 2, 7/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 64years old female in a focus group discussion said:

Those who work closely with the colonial masters started disrespect our traditions, norms and values just as their pay masters did and as such younger once had no regards for their elderly. (FGD 6, 10/5/2026)

In furtherance with the above statement another respondent, an 80years old in a focus group discussion said:

My son, it is a period that I don't want to remember because this white people brought Christianity to deceived the people steal their raw material, abuse both young and old, they made younger once not respect our culture and the elderly, many of our old parents died alone in pains because they took their children and loved once way, forcefully take their land and also force them to work in their own land and paid them wages. This act by them destroyed our old long traditional family care system for the elderly. (FGD 10/5/2026).

Another respondent, an 88-year old male, said:

I am 88 years old, my son, and I lived during the colonial times. They engaged in a variety of immoral practices, such as coercing young people, adolescents, and children into forced work in their oppressive trade system. They taught a few young men how to communicate in their language, and these men went on to act as intermediaries for the native Edo and their white employer. These young guys were indigenous people who turned against their own people by oppressing their fellow native brothers; they disregard elders, native authorities, and our customs. It was the colonial masters who formalized daylight robbery, extortion, and the destruction of our customs and traditions; they disrespected our elders (by biting, arresting, or even killing some of them in broad daylight). This was the genesis of how the natives/villagers started disrespecting our customs, traditions, belief systems, norms, values, and elders whom they once respected. (IDI 18, 10/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 68-year old male, said:

Many elderly people suffered as a result of the activities of these former colonies, and some elderly parents passed away before their time because they were unable to bear the suffering of their children, grandchildren, and loved ones who were either transported as slaves overseas or forced to work for their employers in urban areas. Many elderly people were left to care for small children in their old age. (KII 3, 10/5/2026)

This can also be linked to the statements by Wahab (2013), who said that the introducing foreign education, Christian doctrine, urban development, *industrialisation*, and paid labor, colonization altered established traditional systems, weakening social cohesion and encouraging individualism behaviours.

3. What are the lived experiences of older adults regarding changes in family-based caregiving practices in Idunmwowina Community?

A respondent who is a 74-year old female, said:

I live in Idunmwowina while my children stay in Abuja and Lagos state. Although they send me money and I talk to them on phone but I still miss their emotional care and social interaction which formally existed in the extended family structure. (IDI 20, 11/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 68-year old male, said:

For me my 3 children are in the university in Delta state it's just I and my wife at home. The both of us do everything in the house without the assistance of our children. Although sometimes I look children around to help us do some domestic work at home that physical I and my wife can do because we are too old. The truth is I and my wife miss the absence of our children. (KII 3, 10-5-2026)

Another respondent, a 63-year old male, said:

There was a time I felt very heal, it was my neighbours that really took care of me because all my children are abroad busy work. (IDI, 22, 11/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 68-year old male, said:

These days a lot of older adult independent but in the past they are taken care of by their family members. (FDG 9, 10/5/2026)

In furtherance to the above another respondent said:

Some older adults feel lonely because traditional family gatherings have become less common. (FDG 8, 10/5/2026)

4. How do family members and community leaders explain the factors that have contributed to the erosion of indigenous extended family support systems for elderly care since the colonial period?

One of the respondents who is a chief said:

Urban development, relocation of younger people to the cities, and changing traditional principles have diminished the stability of extended family care system for the elderly. (KII 1, 7/5/2026)

Another respondent, a community leader, said:

The care for older adults by family members today is diminishing because most children are not acquainted with traditional family caregiving obligations because today families have become more unclear. (KII 2, 7/5/2026)

A respondent a focus group discussion said:

The impact of European lifestyles on our society has influenced how families communicate with each other. (FGD 10, 10/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 60year old female, said:

Today individuals now prioritise their immediate household rather than their extended family. (FGD 11, 10/5/2026)

5. In what ways have colonial and postcolonial social, economic, and cultural changes influenced traditional responsibilities toward the care of older adults in Idunmwowina Community?

A respondent, an 81year old male, said:

Today a lot of young people value formal paid jobs in the cities more than staying close to their aged parents and grandparents and this has changed our traditional family care structure. (IDI 26, 11/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 74year old female said:

Christianity and formal education introduced by the colonialist transformed numerous good things, but some traditional caregiving customs are slowly disappearing because Christianity and formal education created the room for individualism rather than communal living. (IDI 20, 11/5/2026)

One of the respondents who is a chief said:

Although the colonial masters restructured our commercial and economic activities, resulting in migration of younger people which in turn weakened traditional family caregiving for the elderly. (KII 1, 7/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 62year old female said:

My brother, it is not easy for me living alone without my children. I am 62 years old, and I live alone. If not for my friend's children, who sometimes come to assist me with domestic work, how would I cope? Although my children send me money, their presents for me is more than money. I am very lonely living alone, and it's not easy. In the old days it was not so. (IDI 25, 11/5/2026)

Another respondent, a community leader said:

"Contemporary economic pressures and the distance from the city to the rural area often make it difficult for children or relatives to fulfil traditional caregiving responsibilities." (KII 2, 7/5/2026)

6. What strategies do older adults, family caregivers, and community stakeholders suggest for revitalizing indigenous extended family support systems for elderly care in Idunmwowina Community?

A respondent, a female, 63 years old said:

Children and close relatives should always create time out to visit their aging parents regularly, even if they live in urban areas. (IDI 29, 11/5/2026)

Another respondent, a 65 years old male said:

Parents should start teaching their kids from their tender age the importance of caring for aging parents and making them understand the cultural and moral value of it. (IDI 29, 11/5/2026)

A respondent who is a chief said:

We should bring back our old village forum where families, relatives, and clans deliberate on the welfare of old people. (KII 1, 7/5/2026)

A respondent who is a male said:

I will suggest that community create a groups of trusted person's which will regularly visit older people who are living alone. (FGD 1, 10/5/2026)

In furtherance to the above another respondent said:

We should use our community festivals to create awareness program that will remind our children of the importance of respecting and caring for elderly people. (FGD 2, 10/5/2026)

The report indicates that colonialism drastically altered the traditional family structures of the Ovia North-East Local Government Area. Due to *urbanisation*, migration, *industrialisation*, and financial difficulties, the extended family structure that had ensured group care for elderly people deteriorated. Despite the continued traditional regard for older adults, older individuals now face diminishing psychological, social, and financial assistance.

CONCLUSION

The research found that traditional family support networks for senior citizens in Idunmwowina community, Ovia North-East Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State, were severely undermined by colonization. Prior to colonialism, older individuals held esteemed roles in extended families and communal structures that ensured financial, well-being, and emotional protection. But the introduction of force labour, slavery, Western education, industrialisation, Catholicism, urban development, and paid labor laws brought forth by colonisation reduced family solidarity and upset traditional caregiving patterns. The research also indicated that technological advancement, industries, urban development and relocation younger people from villages to cities exacerbated the deterioration of family support networks, making many older people more susceptible to psychological isolation, impoverishment, loneliness, and maltreatment. Technical caregiving tasks have significantly decreased, notwithstanding the continued societal regard for senior citizens. Hence, the research comes to the conclusion that colonialism considerably triggered social exclusion of senior people in Idunmwowina community, Ovia North-East Local Government Area and drastically changed indigenous African kinship systems of elderly care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The governing body should create extensive welfare programs that provide healthcare and financial assistance to senior citizens.
- ii. Conventional establishments ought to encourage shared ideals and collective accountability for the care of the ageing.
- iii. To help aging people who are at risk, neighborhood-based supportive networks should be created.
- iv. Despite relocation, children, grandchildren, and other close relatives should continue to assist and engage with aging parents on a regular basis.
- v. Social workers and non-governmental groups ought to offer welfare services and counseling to senior citizens.
- vi. Public awareness campaigns ought to teach the next generation the value of taking care of the older parents.

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