

The Role of Street Level Bureaucrats and Beneficiaries: Assessing Community Awareness towards the Implementation of Tanzania Ageing Policy of 2003 in the Selected Local Authorities in Dodoma Region, Tanzania

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Abstract

Background: An increase in proportions of older population over the world population is a global reality and the same fate is happening in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Considering the situation of elderly in Africa, the African Union Commission in 2004 launched the Policy Framework and Plan of Action (AU – Plan) in order to raise awareness on African countries in the formulation and implementation of policies that address issues of ageing. Although, available few ageing policies in African countries have made significant progress towards the implementation of the MIPAA and AU – Plan but not much has been achieved with the implementation of those policies. This paper tries to assess the implementation of National Aging Policy of 2003 by exploring policy understandings with regards to lower level government leaders “street level bureaucrats” and elderly in the selected local authorities in Dodoma region, Tanzania

Materials and Methods: The study employed a sample of 91 people of whom 80 were older people aged 60 years and above and 11 lower level government officials (street level bureaucrats) including Village Executive Officers, Mtaa Executive Officers, Wards Executive Officer and District Social Work Officer. Random sampling was used to obtain a sample of older people while purposive sampling technique was used to obtain key informants. Data were collected using questionnaire survey and key-informant interview. Descriptive data were analyzed using frequency and percentage and presented by using tables while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis in which themes and sub-themes were determined by organization, reduction and interpretation of the information collected.

Results: Based on the findings, it could be argued and maintained that the NAP 2003 has not adequately accessed and understood by the both implementers and beneficiaries in the study area. Elderly argue that they are not aware of the policy since the local governments’ leaders in their areas have not done enough to let them know what the policy entails at the same time lower level government officials seem to lack exposure.

Conclusion: Hence, considering the situation of elderly in the country there is a need for the government and other stakeholders to ensure the NAP 2003 is implemented successfully by forging an awareness campaign throughout the country.

Key Word: National ageing policy, policy implementation, elderly, street level bureaucrats

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I. INTRODUCTION

An increase in proportions of older population over the world population is a global reality and the same fate is happening in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries (Saka, Oosthuizen, & Nloto, 2019). SSA countries consists of 48 of the 54 African countries and was home to an estimated 46 million people aged 60 years and above in 2015 and this number is projected to increase more than twofold by 2050 (Age International, 2015). Although, the number of older people is increasing, however, elderly in SSA yet experiences deepening poverty, discrimination, violence and abuse and are unable to access entitlements that are theirs by right (HAI, 2008; Nhongo, 2004). Considering the situation of elderly in Africa, the African Union Commission in 2004 launched the Policy Framework and Plan of Action (AU – Plan) in order to raise awareness on African countries in the formulation and implementation of policies that address issues of ageing. The formulation of AU – Plan in Africa was part of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (MIPAA). The MIPAA was adopted by 159 countries at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002 in Madrid, Spain, and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 57/167 of 18 December 2002 (UNECA, 2012). According to Saka et al. (2019), very few countries including Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda and

Tanzania have had ratified national policies on the ageing population while few like Nigeria, Cameroon and Rwanda having their drafted policies awaiting for a passage into law by their respective legislatures. Although, available few ageing policies in African countries have made significant progress towards the implementation of the MIPAA and AU – Plan but not much has been achieved with the implementation of those policies (UNECA, 2012).

In Tanzania the proportion of the population of older people aged 60 years and above is also growing steadily. In 2002 they were 1.4 million, constituting 4% of the general population, however, in 2015, older people were estimated to be 2,520,000 and constitute 5.6% of the general population. Moreover, it is expected that by 2050 that figure will rise to 5,760,000 accounting 7.2% of the entire population (Global Watch Index, 2018). Although, currently the Tanzanian population looks “purely young”, however, the country is surely confronting the rapid increase of population aged 60+ (Nakao, 2016). Older people in Tanzania face various challenges including inadequate income, poor accessibility to health service and inadequate security and protection from violence and discrimination (HelpAge International, 2013). Such challenges require a major strategy towards a broader social planning for the aged. Tanzania began making policies and programmes for social aging after the 2000s (Nakao, 2016). These policies and programmes include the National Ageing Policy (2003), National Strategy for Economic Growth and Reduction of Poverty (1998-2008), National Health Policy (2007), The Health Sector Strategic Plan III (2009 – 2015), Primary Health Service Development Program (2007 – 2017), National Strategy of Non Communicable Diseases (2009 – 2015) and National Eye Care Programs (2010 -2015). The formulation of all these policies aimed at mainstreaming elderly issues into different social and economic policies.

In particular, the National Ageing Policy of 2003 (NAP) was the first ever political document for older people in Tanzania; demonstrating clearly the intention of the government to incorporate ageing issues into development agenda (Nakao, 2016). Tanzania was the only second country in Africa after Mauritius to formulate its policy on ageing (URT, 2003). The general objective of the policy is to ensure that older people are recognized, provided with basic services and accorded opportunity to fully participate in the daily life of the community (URT, 2003). The policy urges the participation of several stakeholders for its implementation including the central government, local government authorities, voluntary agencies, families and villages. For the smooth implementation of the policy, each stakeholder has been provided with various roles to play with. However, studies in Tanzania such as (Kagaruki, 2013; Malalika, 2016; Saka et al., 2019) have indicated that the national ageing is not fully implemented because of poor resources allocated, lack of enforceable law and lack of policy awareness among its stakeholders. According to Khan (2016), the issue of poor policy awareness among policy implementers has been cited as a core problem in policy implementation process mostly in developing countries. Indeed, it is argued that policy awareness among policy implementer at the grass root level (street level bureaucrats) is of great importance for the overall policy implementation. According to Lipsky (1980) as cited in Khan, (2016) ‘street level bureaucrats’ are those front-line public officials implementing government policies such as health care officers, polices, local government officials etc.

The public administration literature on policy implementation has emphasized the importance of these bureaucrats in shaping how policy reforms are translated into local outcomes and ultimately experienced by individuals (Lotta & Marques, 2019). Street-level bureaucrats and frontline service providers implement central government policies and administer social services for communities in countries across the world (Zarychta, Grillos, & Andersson, 2019). Street-level work can also contribute to individual level and institutional legitimacy in policy implementation. A defining characteristic of street-level work is that street-level workers interact directly with citizens (Soares, Medeiros, Lyn, & Crumpton, 2020). Policy may fail for one of a variety of reasons related to implementers' knowledge and opportunities to learn. Individuals may misunderstand policy or lack the knowledge needed for implementation, even if such knowledge exists in the wider milieu (Hill, 2003). Public policies are created and guided by laws, rules, regulations, and guidelines. Policies that are set by laws can vary in terms of the degree of prescription or discretion they permit (Soares et al., 2020). With an understanding that it has experts who better understand the policy, its actions, and results, policymakers may leave an agency to develop primary aspects of a given policy. If policymakers suspect that the agency will implement the policy at odds with their interests, they may seek to specify how policy is to be implemented, with the intent to restrict the space for agency discretion during implementation.

The Tanzanian national ageing policy has a lot to offer if well implemented, but its implementation is seemed to be hampered by poor policy understandings among its implementers including ‘street level bureaucrats’(Kagaruki, 2013). The success of an adopted public policy depends on how successfully it is implemented. Even the very best policy is of little worth if it is not implemented successfully or properly (Khan, 2016). Studies on public policy implementation have not yet gained popularity in Tanzania and especially in elderly studies. Hence, this paper tries to unearth the gap by assessing an extent to which lower level government leaders “street level bureaucrats” and elderly comprehend the National Aging Policy of 2003 in the selected local authorities in Dodoma region, Tanzania

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in Dodoma region specifically in the Dodoma City Council and Chamwino District Council. According to Kothari (2004) the study area is being selected taking into account the ‘logical reasons’ behind that selection. Dodoma region was purposively selected based on the fact that being the capital of the country its people might have enough access to the government policies and programmes documents. The two councils were purposely selected due to having high proportions of older people in their demographic structures compared with other councils in the region (URT, 2013). The study adopted multistage and stratified sampling procedures in the selection of the study areas and respondents respectively. According to Bernard (2011), multistage technique is being used when a research covers a considerable large geographical area. Thus, in the first stage two wards from each council were randomly selected, whereby Ipagala and Kiwanja cha Ndege were selected for Dodoma City Council and Buigiri and Msamalo were selected for Chamwino District Council. Then, four Mitaa (Mlimwa, Ipagala, Chinangali and Kiwanja cha Ndege) were randomly selected for Dodoma City Council. While for Chamwino District Council four villages (Buigiri, Makongoro, Mlebe and Mnase) were randomly selected. The last stage involved stratified sampling technique for choosing the target population. The target groups were stratified in four strata namely elderly, Mtaa/Village Executive Officers (MEOs/VEOs), Ward Executive Officers (WEOs) and District Social Worker Officer (DSWO) (Table). 80 elderly were randomly selected 10 from each village and mtaa, while 4 MEOs and 4 VEOs were purposively selected. Indeed, 2 WEOs and 1 DSWO were purposively selected.

To meet the objectives of this study, both primary and secondary data were collected. For 80 elderly, a structured interview was conducted using a questionnaire tool. Indeed, key informant interview was conducted on MEOs, VEOs, WEOs and DSWO. Secondary data were derived from published and unpublished documents and literature that related to the study objectives. After being collected data was coded, edited and processed by using SPSS version 21.0 to facilitate understanding. Descriptive data analysis (ratios, frequency and percentage) was conducted on quantitative data while Qualitative data was subjected to content analysis. Table 1, shows a summary of the composition of the target group.

Table 1: The Composition of the target group

S/N	Target Group	Number
1	Older People (Aged 60 years and above)	80
2	8 Mtaa/Village Executive Officers (MEOs/VEOs) + 2 Ward Executive Officers (WEOs) + 1 District Social Worker Officer (DSWO)	11
Total		81

Source: Researcher (2020)

II. RESULTS

Socio – economic and demographic characteristics

As indicated in Table 2, most of the elderly (42%) who were interviewed in this research were those with the age between 66 years and 70 years followed by those with the age of 71 years and above. In this research male were more represented (62.5%) compared with women who had 37.5% of the entire sample. The study shows that most of the respondents (53%) were married. Indeed, as it is shown in the table, most of respondents (77%) had acquired only a primary school education.

Table 2: Elderly socio –economic and demographic characteristics

Age		
60 - 65	17	21.0
66 - 70	33	41.5
71 and above	30	37.5
Total	80	100.0
Gender		
Male	50	62.5
Female	30	37.5
Total	80	100.0
Marital status		
Marriage	42	53.1
Divorced	10	13.1
Separated	7	7.7
Unknown	21	26.2

Total	80	100.0
Education		
Primary	62	76.9
Secondary	12	15.4
College	6	7.7
Total	80	100.0

Source: Research (2020)

Information regarding the way National Ageing Policy is being understood among the community

The research aimed at exploring the understandings of the local government officials “street level bureaucrats” (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWO) and elderly towards the NAP 2003. In that regard, several questions were formulated in trying to capture the general awareness of both implementers and beneficiaries. Respondents were asked whether they have ever heard any information related to NAP 2003, naming sources of information through which they came to know the NAP 2003 and whether they have ever read the NAP 2003.

Responses whether respondents have ever heard about the NAP 2003

In order to assess an understanding of implementers (street level bureaucrats) and beneficiaries (elderly) of NAP 2003, the respondents were asked if they have ever heard any information relating to the NAP 2003. The responses to the question are shown in Table.3 below.

Table 3: Responses whether respondents have heard about ageing policy

Target groups	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Street level bureaucrats (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWOs)	8	73	3	27
Elderly	17	11	63	79

Source: Research (2020)

The general impression from the above table is that, the majority (73%) of ‘street level bureaucrats’ (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWOs) have heard about the national aging policy 2003. This is compounded by what the DSWO from Chamwino DC and MEO from Dodoma DC narrated respectively;

“Through serving elderly at some point, as a leader, you do need to know the policy which guides the implementation of different strategies aiming at them. So, basically through my capacity I have already come across with elderly policy” (DWSO from Chamwino DC).

“I know that elderly have their own policy which stipulates measures and strategies to be taken for tackling their problems, however, I have never taken my time reading it thoroughly” (MEO from Dodoma City Council)

However, based on the same question, it seems that majority of elderly (79%) have not heard about anything regarding the NAP 2003. Respondents who never heard anything about the policy said that their leaders at the village and ward levels had never informed them about the existence of such policy. This implies that, although, majority of street level bureaucrats had an idea of the elderly policy as it is shown, regrettably, they never bothered to share the same information to elderly who are the real beneficiaries of same policy.

Responses on sources of information through which respondents came to know the NAP 2003

In order to assess the understanding of implementers and beneficiaries of the NAP 2003, the respondents were asked about the sources of information through which they got to know the National Ageing Policy 2003. The answers to the question are shown in Table.4 below.

Table 4: Sources of information through which respondents came to know the NAP 2003

S/N	Types of Media	Street level bureaucrats (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWOs)		Elderly	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Newspapers	2 (18%)	9 (82%)	7 (9%)	71(81%)
2	From top level leaders	7 (63%)	4 (17%)	12 (15%)	68 (85%)
3	Television	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	11 (14%)	69 (86%)
4	Radio	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	8 (10%)	72 (90%)

Source: Researcher (2020)

The general impression from the above table is that, though, the country has different sources of information, they have not done enough to disseminate information regarding the NAP 2003. Both government officials and elderly do not seem to applaud printing and electronic media as their reliable sources of information regarding elderly policy. Indeed, findings show that majority of street level bureaucrats who came across with the ageing policy got that information from their top leaders and not from the media. This is vindicated by the statement produced by one WEO from Chamwino District Council who narrated as follows:

“In principle, we as government officials at the bottom levels we do only know that various policies are existing through listening from our leaders. Although, in most cases when performing our duties we are bound to know policies in deep, however, that has not been the case in our day to day activities” (WEO from Chamwino DC)

Responses whether respondents have ever read a National Ageing Policy of 2003

In order to assess an understanding of implementers (street level bureaucrats) and beneficiaries (elderly) of National Ageing Policy 2003, the respondents were asked if they had ever read a National Ageing Policy of 2003. The answers to the question are shown in Table.5 below.

Table 5: Responses whether individuals have read a policy

Target groups	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Street level bureaucrats (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWOs)	1	8	10	90
Elderly	0	0	80	100

Source: Researcher (2020)

The general impression from the above table is that the majority (90%) of ‘street level bureaucrats’ (MEOs/VEOs/WEOs/DSWOs) and almost all interviewed elderly have never read the NAP 2003. This is vindicated by interview conducted on MEO from Dodoma City Council and VEO from Chamwino District Council who narrated respectively as follows:

“It is not only the issue of National Ageing Policy of 2003; I have never read any policy related to my job. You know during the job orientation, I was never told to read polices rather I was told other directives. If reading a policy would be a must they could have told me already, and even supply it to me, but since nobody has directed me to do so, why bother?” (MEO from Dodoma City Council)

“You read something that you have in place and which has been directed to you to be your working tool. I seldom hear about the national ageing policy, and even I don’t know where I can get it. I would love to read it if I will stand a chance to have it in my hand, but as long as I am continuing to work probably one day I will read it” (WEO from Chamwino District Council)

III. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, it could be argued and maintained that the NAP 2003 has not adequately accessed and understood by the both implementers and beneficiaries in the study area. On the part of beneficiaries, elderly argue that they are not aware of the policy since the local government leaders in their areas have not done enough to let them know what the policy entails. The local government leaders who are referred in this context include Village Executive Officers, Mtaa Executive Officers and Ward Executive Officers. Ironically, elderly are in the view that, local government leaders at lower levels should be well equipped with various policies which are important at the grass root levels including ageing policy. The need for leaders at the grassroots levels to be well knowledgeable with different social and economic policies has also been warranted by scholars such as (Hudson, Hunter, & Peckham, 2019; Kagaruki, 2013; Saka et al., 2019). According to Hudson et al. (2019), one of the salient features of many policies – especially those requiring face-to-face contact with the public – is that “lower level” staff should have considerable level of knowledge and have to use that knowledge to strategize activities for effective policy implementation.

On the part of implementers who in this study are referred to as “street level bureaucrats”, the study findings indicate that those lower level government officials lack exposure with issues related to policies. It has been indicated that some of them have heard about the policy but they did not have the policy document in hand. Interestingly, even some of these leaders have never come across such document. Because of this, it has been revealed that, even the content of the policy is not well understood to some of these leaders. Generally speaking, the implication from these findings is that, there are respondents who are aware of the policy but are not sure of the content and what to be done. There is also lack of initiatives among government officials at the lower levels to look for the policy document. Indeed, that being the case, it remains unclear as to how street level bureaucrats are able to implement the policy if at all they are not conversant with it.

IV. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the implementation of NAP 2003 will not be successful if concerns of street level bureaucrats and elderly are not being put into considerations. There seem to be a proper lack of awareness with regards to policy document and its content among lower lever government officials and elderly. A policy being a document that explains series or pattern of government activities or decisions that are designed to remedy some social problems needs to be well understood by all involved parties in its implementation stages. Indeed, for successful implementation, it requires continuous collaboration with a range of stakeholders including local “downstream” implementation actors such as end users. The weakness of collaborative policy implementation strategies and the failure to establish a common ground for public policy awareness remains one of the key reasons for subsequent policy implementation failure in developing countries including Tanzania. Hence, considering the situation of elderly in the country there is a need for the government and other stakeholders to ensure the NAP 2003 is implemented successfully by forging an awareness campaign throughout the country.

The aim of any research is to undertake an investigation whose outcome will enable the researcher suggest some course of actions. The study has yielded some information from which the following recommendations are made:

- i. Leaders at the lower levels (street level bureaucrats) should be provided with various policies when executing their duties to enhance their exposure and understanding.
- ii. The government need to convene various seminars, workshops and meeting for street level bureaucrats in order for them to share different issues regarding the NAP 2003
- iii. The NAP 20003 should be translated into a simple and concise language to make it amenable for elderly in different parts of the country. This will help elderly learn different measures and strategies the government wishes to put in place for the sake of supporting elderly wellbeing.
- iv. To create conducive forum for easy dissemination of information regarding NAP 2003, the government needs to cooperate with various stakeholders including mass media.

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