Research Article

Assessment of Care Given by Community Health Nurses on Management of Elderly Persons in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa

Data Aluye-Benibo*, Helen Idubamo Wankasi, Letticia Ikiomoye Beredugo and Tari Amakoromo

Department of Community Health Nursing, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Corresponding author:
Data Aluye-Benibo,
Department of Community Health Nursing,
Niger Delta University,
Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria,
E-mail: amakoromot@gmail.com
Received: 18-Feb-2025,
Manuscript No. AMHSR-25-161473;
Editor assigned: 21-Feb-2025,
PreQC No. AMHSR-25-161473 (PQ);
Reviewed: 10-Mar-2025,
QC No. AMHSR-25-161473;
Revised: 21-May-2026,
Manuscript No. AMHSR-25-161473 (R);
Published: 28-May-2026,
DOI: 10.54608.annalsmedical.2026.197

Abstract

With the global trend towards an increasing aging population, there is a corresponding increase in the health problems associated with elderly population especially in developing countries including Nigeria. The study was aimed to assess the care given by community health nurses on management of elderly persons in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive design. The population of the study was 100 community health nurses who provide direct clinical care for elderly persons. The sample was calculated using Taro-Yamane simplified formula for finite population giving a sample of 50 community health nurses. The instrument for data collection was questionnaires, the reliability of the instrument was done using test retest method and a reliability co-efficient of 0.91 was obtained. The questionnaires had five sections, section A covered socio demographic data, section B, C, D consisted of items which explored level of knowledge. Attitude, practice and section E elicited information on factors influencing the care and management of the elderly. The completed questionnaire was coded and analyzed using E.P.I info-7. Descriptive statistics of percentage, mean, standard deviation were used for data analysis. The criterion means of 2.5 was also used and results of the study revealed that 95% of the nurses had good knowledge of care of the elderly. Majority of the nurses had positive attitude above rating scale of 2.5. The nurses moderately practiced care during management of the elderly during. The factors that positively influenced nurse's attitude to the care of the elderly were years of experience, age and mental state of the elderly. There was significant association ($P<0.05$) between attitude of nurses and mean years of experience.

Keywords: Assessment; Care given; Community health nurses; Management; Elderly persons

Introduction

Ageing is the accumulation of progressive positive, physical, emotional, psychological and cognitive changes in a person over time, Bowen, et al. It involves a multidimensional process of physical, psychological and social change. Some dimensions of aging increase and expand over time, while others deteriorate. Research shows that even in late life, potentials exist for physical, mental and social growth and development [1]. Ageing is not a disease; but stage of life where there is retrograde process in biological growth and development leads to decreased powers for survival and adjustment. Aging is an important part of all human societies reflecting the biological changes that occur and also reflecting cultural and societal convention.

An estimated 100,000 people worldwide die each day of age related causes [2]. According to National Population

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How to cite this article: Benibo DA, et al. Assessment of Care Given by Community Health Nurses on Management of Elderly Persons in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa. Ann Med Health Sci Res. 2026;16:1-8

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Commission [3], persons who are old enough to receive pension who are between ages of 60-65 years are regarded as the elderly. The elderly is classified by age into young old for those aged 60-74 years, middle old for those aged 75-84 years, old for those aged 85-94 years and oldest old for those 95 years and above [4].

Care of the elderly is the fulfillment of the special needs and requirements that are unique to senior citizens. It covers such services as assisted living, adult day care, long term care, nursing homes, hospice care and home care. Elderly care emphasizes the social and personal requirements of senior citizens who need some assistance with daily activities and health care, but who desire to age with dignity. The care of the elderly is multidimensional and these include physical, emotional, spiritual and social care [5].

However, improvement in primary health care with focus on prevention of childhood diseases through immunization did not highlight the care of the elderly which should be one of the components of primary health care programme in most developing countries [6]. Also most curricula for training health manpower in Nigeria has minimum highlight of elderly care [7]. Yet the population of this segment of the society is on the rise in developing countries with their special care needs. Traditionally, Nigeria elderly care system has been the responsibility of family members and was carried out within the extended family system [8]. But with modern trends, elderly care is currently being provided by state or charitable institutions. This is attributed to decreasing family size, the life expectancy of elderly people is becoming greater as the day goes by, the geographical dispersion of families, and the tendency for women to be educated and work outside the home is on the increase [9].

In most developing countries including Nigeria the population of the elderly is increasing rapidly but the government does not seem to be making any major commitments to elderly healthcare. The government is still assuming that families should take care of their elderly without recognizing that the extended family system is at the verge of collapse.

Currently most families find it difficult to manage individual homes and face their challenges. This is slowly leading to neglect and abuse of the elderly persons. Care of the elderly requires serious knowledge of the ageing process, nutrition and daily needs of the elderly. In Nigeria, marginalization of the elderly especially in their care and management is a common episode Abdulraheem et al. Those involved in the management and provision of health care have important roles to play in stating programmes relating to elderly care especially in screening and detecting abuse.

Unfortunately, doctors do not diagnose elderly abuse because it is not part of their legal or professional training hence does not feature in their list of differential diagnosis. The community health nurse, according to Abdulrahem and Parakoyi plays major roles in determining and implementing desirable standards of health care, acting as a professional in developing core of professional knowledge and should have ability to impart same to others. They are often the providers of services designed to maintain health and prevent illness. Research has also shown that the quality of health care service provided to older population is strongly influenced by care givers attitude towards older people Gallaghar, et al. This undermines the need to assess the impact of care of the elderly among community health nurses in Yenagoa Local government area Bayelsa State.

The world elderly population is increasing rapidly and the rate at which it is increasing is higher in developing countries which Nigeria is not an exception. Currently, Nigeria has the one of the highest number of the elderly people in Africa estimated to be about 9.4% of the Nigeria population. With this accelerated increase in the aging population, the number of people who needs health care will undoubtedly increase. Donatelle posited that in most curricula for health professionals, little or nothing is indicated about the care of the elderly showing absolute neglect in this area. Health care services are a major component towards providing quality living, however, it is a common problem that such services have posed a greater challenge on the health seeking behaviour of the aged individuals.

According to Smith, majority of the aged persons had age associated illnesses such as blood pressure, cardiac problems, diabetes, joint pains, kidney infections, cancer and tuberculosis that takes a long time to treat which particularly affect their health seeking behaviour. Aged individuals are found to have patronized traditional healers, resorted to self-medication using local herbs or visit chemists' shops whenever they are sick. However, involvement of professionally trained health workers such as nurses, doctors, physicians, among others will help to provide adequate health care services to them that prove effective and increase their health outcome.

Therefore, this study seeks to assess the care given by community health nurses on management of elderly persons in Yenagoa local government area.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive study design to assess the care given by community health nurses on management of elderly persons in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. According to Isangedi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri, the descriptive study survey allows orderly collection. This research study was carried out in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The population of study consists of 100 nurses from the ten (10) health centers that provide direct clinical health care to elderly persons in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The sample size was estimated from the target population of 100 using the Taro-Yamane formula.

$n=N/1+N(d)^2$

Where, n= sample size

N=population size

Thus, $n=100/1+100(0.05)^2$

n=100/1+1

=100/2

=50

A purposive sampling technique was used to get respondents for the study. The community health nurses were used in all the ten (10) health centers in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. These are tests, questionnaires, inventories, interview schedules or guides or any other rating scales, and survey or any other forms which are used to collect information on substantially identical items from 10 or more respondents. A careful self-design questionnaire was constructed by the researcher consisting of sections A and B. Section A was used to elicit information on the socio demographic variable of the respondents, while section B was on the impact of care given by community health nurses on management of elderly people. The respondents were required to tick (√) to describe views on the subject matter. Face and content validity was ensured. The developed questionnaire was given to community health specialist and two others who are experts in measurement to evaluate its content clarity, scope, consistency and dependability. In this study, the test-retest method was used in establishing the reliability of the instrument. Then 50 copies were given to the nurses in the ten health centres in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The questionnaire was distributed on face to face basis to the respondents. Data was collected by the investigator, the purpose of the study was explained to the nurses and inform consent was obtained. Information required for this study was collected using quantitative means via the use of self-administered copies of questionnaires, same was retrieved and was used for data analysis.

Following completion of data collection, it was reviewed, organized and entered into a microcomputer running the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version). Software for windows vista to validate and analyze the entries. The result is based upon the data obtained from community health nurses. The impact of care given by community health nurses on management of elderly people was reported in tables and percentage. The survey was descriptive and the data was summarized as counts and percentages. The study was approved by the Faculty of Nursing, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. Letter of consent was presented at the various health centers for the purpose of seeking permission from related authorities. Participants were properly briefed by the interviewer on the nature of study, its confidentiality, importance to the society and procedures for completing the questionnaire, and informed oral consent was obtained.

Results

Table 1 The socio demographic table shows the highest or majority of each variables. 31-40 years were 30 (60%), 48 (96%) were Christians, 33 (66%) were married, 27 (54%) were 11-20 years of practice, while 48 (96%) were female's respondents in the 17 health centers Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Shows the socio demographic data of respondents (n=50).

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
21-30	15	30
31-40	30	60
41-50	5	10
Religion		
Christian	48	96
Islam	2	4
Traditional worshippers	0	0
Marital status		
Single	15	30
Married	33	66
Divorced	2	4
Years of practice		
1-10	20	40
11-20	27	54
21-30	3	6

Gender		
Male	2	4
Female	48	96

Table 2 shows majority on the knowledge of community health nurses on care of the elderly people: Elderly people that need regular exercise respondents were 38 (76%) said yes; while 30 (60%) said yes to proper mouth care as a basic need for the elderly; 48 (96%) said yes to the fact that elderly people need to eat regular and properly; while 25 (50%) said yes to memorizing capability in the elderly people is affected due to structural changes in the brain; while 40 (80%) said yes that sound sleep in the elderly can be encouraged by restricting visitors during rest period and providing care in groups; while 33 (66%) said aging process will lead to anatomical and physiological changes in the elderly; while 50 (100%) said yes to the fact that bedsores in the elderly can be prevented by keeping the skin clean and dry and bed linens wrinkle free and dry.

Table 2: The knowledge of community health nurse on care of the elderly.

Questions/Statement	Frequency	Percentage
The elderly people need regular exercise		
Yes	38	76
No	10	20
Not sure	2	4
Proper mouth care is a basic need for the elderly		
Yes	30	60
No	15	30
Not sure	5	10
Elderly people need to eat regular and properly		
Yes	48	96
No	2	4
Not sure	0	0
Memorizing capability in the elderly people is affected due to structural changes in the brain		
Yes	25	50
No	15	30
Not sure	10	20
Sound sleep in the elderly can be encouraged by restricting visitors during rest period and providing care in groups		
Yes	40	80
No	2	4
Not sure	8	16
Aging process will lead to anatomical and physiological changes		
Yes	33	66
No	2	4
Not sure	5	10
Bedsores in the elderly can be prevented by keeping the skin clean and dry and bed linens wrinkle free and dry		
Yes	50	100
No	0	0

Not sure	0	0

Table 3 shows majority response on the practice of care by the community health nurses to the elderly people: Majority of about 30 (60%) said they like taking care of the elderly people always; 38 (76%) said assessment and evaluation are needed for effective care of the elderly; 25 (50%) said they attach titles to the names of the elderly while taking care of them to create relationship; 35 (70%) said prompt attention is given to elderly people even in emergency situation; 29 (58%) said they encourage the elderly to eat adequately and at times assist in feeding them; while 25 (50%) said sometimes they neglect themselves and concentrate only on the aged when taking care of them.

Table 3: Practice of care given by community health nurses to the elderly people.

Questions/Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I like taking care of the elderly		
Always	30	60
Sometimes	15	30
Never	5	10
Assessment and evaluation are needed for effective care of the elderly		
Always	38	76
Sometimes	12	24
Never	0	0
I attach titles to the names of the elderly while taking care of them to create relationship		
Always	25	50
Sometimes	20	40
Never	5	10
Prompt attention is given to elderly people even in emergency situation		
Always	35	70
Sometimes	15	30
Never	0	0
I encourage the elderly to eat adequately and at times assist in feeding them		
Always	29	58
Sometimes	20	40
Never	1	2
I neglect myself and concentrate only on the aged when taking care of them		
Always	15	30
Sometimes	25	50
Never	10	20

Table 4 shows majority on factors that influence nurses attitude of care towards managing the elderly people and their response: 25 (50%) agree that some elderly are abandoned due to lack of social support; 30 (60%) also agreed that elderly people exhibit different behavior which affect their care; 30 (60%) strongly agreed that it is difficult to persuade and convince elderly people about their care in the hospital; 20 (40%) agreed and also strongly agreed that mental statues of the elderly people affect their care and decision; 28 (56%) strongly agreed that taking care of the elderly is very demanding; while 35 (70%) agreed that hospitals should have a special wards for effective care of the elderly people.

Table 4: Factors that influence nurse's attitude of care towards managing the elderly people.

Questions/Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Some elderly are abandoned due lack of social support		
Agreed	25	50
Strongly agreed	15	30
Disagreed	10	20
Elderly people exhibit different behaviour which affect their care		
Agreed	30	60
Strongly agreed	18	36
Disagreed	2	4
It is difficult to persuade and convince elderly people about their care in the hospital		
Agreed	15	30
Strongly agreed	30	60
Disagreed	5	10
Mental status of the elderly people affect their care and decision		
Agreed	20	40
Strongly agreed	20	40
Disagreed	10	20
Taking care of the elderly is very demanding		
Agreed	20	40
Strongly agreed	28	56
Disagreed	2	4
Hospitals should have a special wards for effective care of the elderly		
Agreed	35	70
Strongly agreed	15	30
Disagreed	0	0

Discussion

The major findings from the study were discussed with respect to the objectives for the study in relation to findings from previous related studies. The discussion was done under research questions for better understanding.

The knowledge and attitude of community health nurses on care of the elderly

The study revealed that a greater percentage (96%) of the total population of community health nurses has the knowledge on care of the elderly people in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. This is in line with the study conducted by Kaur et al., assess the knowledge and attitude regarding care of the elderly among nursing students. A cross sectional study was undertaken on 267 undergraduate nursing students. A pre validated, self-administered questionnaire was used for the assessment. The knowledge questionnaire consisted of 28 multiple choice questions with one right answer. The total score was further categorized as poor, average and good as per the score obtained by the subject. The attitude was assessed on a Likert five-point scale and it consisted of 16 items. The total score was further categorized as unfavorable, neutral and favorable attitude as per the scores obtained. Majority (95.5%) of the subjects were in the positive category of attitude while (76.4) were in good category of knowledge score. Knowledge and attitude were positively correlated. According to Kaur et al., nurses need to be well equipped with knowledge and should also have positive attitude regarding elderly care.

Practice of care given by community health nurses to the elderly

The study revealed that a greater percentage of (76%) of the total population was satisfied with the practice of care given by community health nurses to the elderly people. This is in

line with the study conducted in Nsukka Enugu State by Okoye and ASA to investigate the experiences and practices of care givers of elderly people. Questionnaires were distributed to 330 respondents, result shows that there exists a significant relationship between caregiver's age and level of stress (p=0.001). The sex of the receiver, the level of education of caregivers, level of education of care receiver are all significantly related to the level of stress and also, the experiences and practices of caregivers on elderly were of high level and great satisfaction was obtained. According to Okoye and Asa providing care especially to the elderly, takes a huge toll, both physically and emotionally on a caregiver. As the population of the elderly grows in Nigeria, an emerging issue is the care and support of elderly individuals in the years to come. Few people are prepared for the responsibilities and tasks of caring for the aged because of the stress involved.

Factors that influence nurse's attitude of care towards managing the elderly people

The study revealed that a greater percentage (70%) of the total population was of good attitude. This is in line with the study conducted by Mandy, Mitchel and Oniel that reported health workers have positive attitude towards the care of the elderly. It is also in line with the Oyetunde, Ojo and Ojewale opinion that there is positive attitude of health workers towards the care of the elderly. The positive attitude of health workers towards the care of the elderly in the study is probably due to high level of education and well trained health workers. This is in accordance with Nelson who concluded that trained health workers are more likely to develop positive attitude to the care of the elderly.

Summary

This study examined the impact of care given by community health nurses in management of the elderly people in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The specific objectives of this study includes to assess the level of knowledge of community health nurses on the physical, emotional and social care of the elderly in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State to identify nurses practice in the provision of care for the elderly in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State and to identify the factors that influence nurse's attitude of care towards managing the elderly in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State. The study adopted a purposive sampling techniques and a descriptive design. The study made use of primary data which were retrieved from the field through the aid of structured questionnaires and data was analyzed using SPSS, data was summarized in percentages and tables were uses for data presentation. The study of the findings revealed that majority of the respondents have knowledge on the physical, emotional and social care of the elderly. The study also revealed that majority of nurses practice in provision of care was good. Result of the study further revealed that majority identified the factors that influence nurses of care towards managing the elderly.

Implication of the study to the nursing profession

In most developing countries including Nigeria, the population of the elderly is increasing. There is need for health care facilities to have necessary personnel and skills to assist in caring for the elderly people. It is therefore important for all nurses to have the knowledge, positive attitude, good practices (skills) on care towards management of elderly people. Some of the factors that will influence them like years of experience should be tackled by involving the nurses in seminars, workshops, health programs so as to improve their skills, experience in caring for the elderly people.

Limitation of the Study

Time factors: The researcher was faced with time constraints due to tedious academic program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, health care professionals need to have the right skills to manage a more demanding role in the future. In order to offer effective services for the elderly people, a skilled workforce of community health nurses is therefore very necessary. It is also important for health workers to have adequate knowledge on the basic needs of the elderly. This is necessary because these needs must be met every day for the elderly to be able to live independently for as long as possible and caretakers would be able to help the aged meet these needs without compromising their health and safety. These needs include personal hygiene, mobility, nutrition, nurses a d doctors visit and prescription, physical activities (exercise).

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations;

- The need to provide more resources and also training of personnel in area of elderly care.
- Also, special wards/department should be created for the elderly in the hospitals with well trained staff in the area of specialization.
- The government should develop a health policy for the elderly that will capture the care of the elderly.
- Furthermore, government should develop a system of periodical health worker's evaluation to determine strategies of upgrading their knowledge and enhancing practice.
- Health workers should exhibit behavior that is welcoming to the elderly.
- Although the findings of the study show that community health nurses have good knowledge on the care of the elderly, the attitude of the health workers was statistically significant with mean years of experience *i.e.*, the years of practice is associated with attitude of health workers.

- There should be development of follow up courses and in service training programs should be conducted to maintain efficient performance of individuals previously trained in the care of the elderly as well encouraging health workers to attend national and international congresses, seminars symposiums and workshops on care of the elderly.

Suggestion for Studies

Further studies should be carried out on this same topic "impact of care given by community health nurses in management of the elderly in Yenagoa LGA, Bayelsa State" concentrating on the socio-demographic and practices of nurses on the elderly. Further study using a larger sample size is recommended.

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