

## Physiological Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

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### **Abstract**

*The study sought to determine the selected Physiological Variables and Care of the Elderly among Civil Servant in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 30,335 civil servants in Idongesit Nkanga Secretariat Uyo. Multi-stage sampling procedure and snowball sampling technique were used to select a sample size of 364 civil servants who were used as respondents for the study. A structured questionnaire titled "Physiological Care of the Elderly Questionnaire (PCEQ)" was used to collect data for the study. A 23 item instruments with three sections was used for data collection. It was validated by three experts from the Department of Home Economics Education and other cognate disciplines all in University of Uyo. A reliability coefficient of 0.95 was obtained using Cronbach alpha statistical method. Data collected were analyzed using Mean. Findings revealed that the physical care given to the elderly were sufficient indicating a grand mean values of ( $\bar{x}$ =3.60) and the medical care given to the elderly was sufficient indicating a grand mean values of ( $\bar{x}$ =3.38) although the elderly were not encouraged to exercise daily mean value of ( $\bar{x}$ =2.08). Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that the physical and medical care given to the elderly in the study area were sufficient but recommend among others that civil servants encourage the elderly to exercise daily to keep them healthy.*

**Keywords:** Physiological Care, Elderly, Physical Care, Medical Care, Civil Servants

### **Introduction**

Ageing is a natural process, and everyone must undergo this phase of life at their own time and pace. In the broader sense, ageing reflects all the changes taking place over the course of life. These changes start from birth—one grows, develops and attains maturity. To the young, ageing is exciting. Middle age is the time when people notice the age-related changes like greying of hair, wrinkled skin and a fair amount of physical decline. Even the healthiest, aesthetically fit cannot escape these changes. Slow and steady physical impairment and functional disability are noticed resulting in increased dependency in the period of old age. According to World Health Organization (2021), ageing is a course of biological reality which

starts at conception and ends with death. It has its own dynamics, much beyond human control. However, this process of ageing is also subject to the constructions by which each society makes sense of old age. The term ‘Elderly’ is applied to those individuals belonging to age 65 years and above, who represent the fastest growing segment of populations throughout the world (Perpetua & Pelsler, 2019). The aged – elderly are those who are undergoing depreciation physiologically, mentally and as a result, incapable of doing most chores without help or assistance (Echeta & Ezech, 2019). Throughout the struggle from birth to death, old individuals’ ability to adapt and succeed is significantly affected by their physical health, personality, former life experiences, adequate financial opportunities, medical care, social role and their participation to social activities (Butler, 2016). As humans gets older, meaning of life, its features and forms change. Physical, psychological and social changes that people undergo throughout aging also bring about the ability to develop, apply and change certain strategies to cope with these changes. Changes which have an important place in individual lives of old people also have effects on their social lives (Emiroglu, 2016).

Family members need to render appropriate physical care for the elderly. This includes purchasing new clothes, making sure the house which they stay is well maintained, providing the necessary toiletries and maintaining good personal hygiene for the elderly (Echeta & Ezech, 2019). Physical care of the elderly is the right and responsibility to maintain a home for the elderly and provide for the routine care of the elder (Ralf, Manfred & Mark, 2020). Physical comfort for the elderly differs from the needs of the young. In order for the elderly loved ones to maintain their dignity and feelings of self-worth as they age, it is important to help them foster a good personal care regime. Being unhappy with one’s appearance, can significantly impact how one feels about oneself. Being well groomed and maintaining good personal hygiene, is one-way families can support the elderly and promote positive feelings of self. Requiring assistance to maintain one’s grooming and personal hygiene can be embarrassing for an elderly person, so it is important to foster feelings of trust and respect. Benedicts, Jaffe and Segal (2017) observed that family is a major determinant of the level of physical care given to the elderly. Humans value their dignity, so one need to promote that by being calm, gentle and relaxed when approaching personal care. Each individual’s grooming and personal care needs will vary depending on their overall health and mobility. It is important to assess the level of help required and then discuss with the person involved. Good communication is imperative, especially when discussing something that is typically a private activity.

Health services are the most important requirement when it comes to elderly needs (Baker, 2019). Elderly people have age related health issues which is a normal part of life and cannot be avoided. Regular medical check-ups are useful to monitor the health of the elderly and also to anticipate potential future issues. Caring for the elderly medical needs requires total dedication from family members at different stages in the life of the elderly. Medical care is the provision of what is necessary for a person’s health and well-being by a doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional. Health care is the maintenance or improvement of health via the

prevention, diagnosis, treatment, recovery, or cure of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments in people (Simmons, 2020).

When health concerns make it difficult for people to care for themselves, it is often family members who step in as caregivers to ensure they are able to stay at home. In the twenty-first century society, there is still a lingering stereotype of an old man, as an ailing, sick, infirm, and infantile individual, continuous help, care from family members or social services (Richard, 2017). The elderly depends increasingly on others for their day-to-day maintenance, due to various physiological variables or changes such as blood pressure, weight loss or gain and exercise, blood sugar level which has serious implications on the well-being of the elderly in the home (Gol, 2016). As people get older, they experience some physiological changes which influences the individual needs and the level of support they require to meet such needs. The elderly constitutes one of the vulnerable groups of any society and researches both global and local indicate cases of elder abuse and neglect (Ekot, 2016), hence the need for this study, aimed at determining the Physiological Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the Physiological Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Physical Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
2. Medical Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in the study area.

**Research Questions:** The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the Physical Cares of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the Medical Cares of the Elderly among Civil Servants in the study area?

### **Methodology**

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The design is a systematic method for gathering information from a sample of entities for the purpose of constructing quantitative descriptions of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members (Avedian, 2016). The design was deemed appropriate because civil servants in Akwa Ibom State constitute a large population and they have elderly members in their households. The study was conducted in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Uyo is the state capital and also doubles as a Local Government Area. The study area has a total landmass of 214.31 square kilometers and lies between latitudes 4°58'N and 5°04'N and longitudes 7°51'E and 8°01'E. It is bounded by Ikono, Itu, Ibiono Ibom, Uruan, Abak, Ibesikpo Asutan and Nsit Ibom Local Government Areas (Ekpenyong, Shaibu and Etim, 2019). The people speak 'Ibibio' which is a common characteristic of the different part of the state, while non-Indigenes speak different languages. Residents in the study area are predominantly civil servants, traders

and a few farmers. The State Secretariat is housed by a complex tagged 'Idongesit Nkanga' and these complex houses virtually all the offices where the civil servants in the state work. Owing the increase in the elderly population coupled with the demands placed on civil servants in the study area, the area was deemed appropriate for the study.

The population of the study comprised of approximately 30,335 civil servants in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State (Akwa Ibom State Civil Service Commission, 2018). This figure is made up of all the civil servants in the 26 government ministries in Idongesit Nkanga Secretariat. The sample size of 364 respondents was selected for the study. The sample was determined using ([www.researchadvisor/samplesize.org](http://www.researchadvisor/samplesize.org), 2006) table. Multistage sampling procedure and Snowball sampling technique were used to select respondents from the entities. Snowball sampling was used for the study as it is a non-probability sampling technique in which the samples have traits that are rare to find (Levine, 2015). The selection of respondents led to a cascade in which one respondent linked the researchers to other respondents with similar cases. Stage one involved the location of respondent who had an elderly person at home to care for; stage two had to do with the researchers being linked by the first respondent to other respondents with similar predicaments and the link continued (Snowball) which led to the selection of 14 civil servants from the 26 ministries.

A structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and tagged: "Physiological Care of the Elderly Questionnaire" (PCEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument had 3 sections A, B and C and 23 items. Section A had three items on the personal characteristics of the respondents while Sections B and C had 10 items each which sought information on the physical and medical care of the elderly respectively. Some of the items were ticked while others were rated on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with the assigned score of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The instrument was subjected to face validity by three experts one from the Department of Home Economics Education and two from other cognate disciplines: Department of Educational Foundations and a Statistician all in University of Uyo. All the corrections made by the validates were incorporated into the final instrument. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, it was administered on 20 persons who were not part of the respondents but had elderly family members to care for and were residing within the study area. Cronbach Alpha statistical analysis was used to analyse the responses and a reliability coefficient of 0.95 was obtained from the data.

The questionnaires were administered on the respondents in their respective ministries through the help of four research assistants. The instruments were filled and collected within three days and a retrieval rate of 98% (360) was achieved. Mean statistical analysis was used to answer the research questions. Decision for answering the research questions were taken based on the mean values obtained. Where the mean value was 2.5 and above, the type of care given was regarded as being sufficient whereas when the mean value was below 2.5, the care was termed Not Sufficient.

## Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the Physical Cares of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 1:** Mean Analysis of the Physical Cares of the Elderly in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

s/no	Physical care of the elderly	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1	I ensure that my elderly takes their bath daily	3.78	S
2	I assist my elderly in washing their clothes	3.29	S
3	I always assist my elderly to cut their hair	3.63	S
4	I always assist my elderly in grooming their nails	3.61	S
5	I always assist my elderly in toileting	3.15	S
6	I allow my elderly do things independently	3.26	S
7	I ensure my elderly's room is well ventilated	3.86	S
8	I always ensure my elderly's room is warm	3.45	S
9	I always provide all the necessary toiletries needed by my elderly to take their bath	3.98	S
10	I ensure my elderly's room is clean	3.99	S
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>S</b>

*S= Sufficient; NS= Not Sufficient*

Table 1 shows the mean analysis of the physical care of the elderly among civil servants in Akwa Ibom State. Findings revealed that civil servants ensured the elderly's room was clean ( $\bar{x}=3.99$ ); provided all the necessary toiletries needed by the elderly to take their bath ( $\bar{x}=3.98$ ); ensured that the elderly's room was well ventilated ( $\bar{x}=3.86$ ); ensured that the elderly took their bath ( $\bar{x}=3.78$ ); assisted the elderly to cut their hair ( $\bar{x}=3.63$ ); assisted the elderly in grooming their nails ( $\bar{x}=3.61$ ); ensured the elderly's room was warm, assisted the elderly in washing their clothes, allowed the elderly do things independently and assisted the elderly in toileting ( $\bar{x}=3.29$ ;  $\bar{x}=3.26$  and  $\bar{x}=3.15$ ) respectively. All the items had their mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 with the grand mean of 3.60. This means that the physical care given to the elderly among civil servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State was Sufficient.

**Research Question 2:** What is the Medical Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

**Table 2:** Mean Analysis of the Medical Care of the Elderly in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

s/no	Medical care of the elderly	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1	I ensure that my elderly's prescribed medications are administered at the appropriate time	3.49	S
2	I ensure that my elderly medications are safely stored	3.98	S
3	I ensure that my elderly is taken for regular medical check-ups.	3.00	S

4	I encourage my elderly to exercise daily by walking	2.08	NS
5	I encourage my elderly to have adequate sleep	3.12	S
6	I discourage my elderly from smoking	3.97	S
7	I discourage my elderly from taking alcohol	3.74	S
8	I encourage my elderly to maintain a healthy weight	3.41	S
9	I encourage my elderly to reduce chronic stress	3.19	S
10	I enforce the use of mosquito nets for my elderly	3.77	S
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>S</b>

*S= Sufficient; NS= Not Sufficient*

Table 2, shows that the mean analysis of the medical care of the elderly among civil servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Findings revealed that civil servants ensured the elderly's medications were safely stored ( $\bar{x}=3.98$ ); discouraged the elderly from smoking ( $\bar{x}=3.97$ ); enforced the use of mosquito nets for the elderly ( $\bar{x}=3.77$ ); discouraged the elderly from taking alcohol ( $\bar{x}=3.74$ ); ensured the elderly's prescribed medications were administered at the appropriate time ( $\bar{x}=3.49$ ); encouraged the elderly maintained a healthy weight ( $\bar{x}=3.41$ ); encouraged the elderly reduced chronic stress ( $\bar{x}=3.19$ ); encouraged the elderly to had adequate sleep, ensured the elderly was taken for regular medical check-ups, but civil servants does not encourage the elderly to exercise daily by walking ( $\bar{x}=3.12$ ;  $\bar{x}=3.00$  and  $\bar{x}=2.08$ ) respectively. All the items except one have their mean scores above the cut-off point of 2.50 with the grand mean of 3.38. This means that the medical care given to the elderly in the study area is Sufficient except that they are not encouraged to exercise daily.

## Discussion of Findings

### Physical Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

Physical care of the elderly constitutes all the bodily attention given to an elderly person to enhance their wellbeing such as purchasing new clothes, making sure the house which they stay is well maintained, providing the necessary toiletries and maintaining good personal hygiene for them amongst others. The result on physical care of the elderly among civil servants in the study area revealed that the physical care given to the elderly was sufficient. The findings lend credence to the findings of Benedicts, Jaffe and Segal (2017), who discovered that family is a major determinant of the level of physical care given to the elderly. This also points to the fact that with the help of the family, adequate physical care can be provided to the elderly. Therefore, the family is a major determinant of the physical care accorded to the elderly amongst them.

This finding presupposes that the elderly who reside with members of their families in the urban areas and such family members are financially stable, enjoy sufficient care. However,

this finding may differ if the study was conducted in a rural community or amongst family members who do not have a stable source of income.

### **Medical Care of the Elderly among Civil Servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State**

As individuals age, they begin to experience age related issues that require medical care. Findings reveal that the medical care accorded the elderly in Uyo Local Government Area whose care givers are civil servants was sufficient although it was observed that the elderly were not encouraged to engaged to walk daily which is a requirement for healthy living. This finding is in line with the assertions of Comijs, Kivela, Pillemer, Podnieks & Finkelhor (2018), whose study revealed that good medical care as it is often noted, is a function of the family and adequate financial capacity. Therefore, the family should ensure that the elderly medical care is always attended to.

### **Conclusion**

The study sought to determine the Physiological Variables and Care of the Elderly among Civil Servant in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Two purposes and research question guided the study. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised of 30,335 civil servants in Idongesit Nkanga Secretariat Uyo. The sample size of 364 civil servants from the 26 ministries in the Secretariat was determined using research advisor/sample size table. Multi-stage sampling procedure and Snowball technique were used to select a sample which involved the selection of 14 respondents from the 26 ministries. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers aver that the physiological care of the elderly among civil servants in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State was sufficient despite their poor involvement in the exercise.

**Recommendations:** Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that:

1. Caregivers should maintain or improve the physical care given to the elderly; their daily physical needs should not be neglected.
2. Caregivers should pay continuous attention to the health and medical care of the elderly periodically, to identify risks for prompt action. Exercise is vital to improve the health of the elderly; caregivers should always encourage and ensure that the elderly exercise daily at least by walking.

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