# KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF CARE OF THE ELDERLY PATIENTS AMONG NURSES IN FEDERAL MEDICAL CENTRE IN UMUAHIA, ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of nurses in the care of elderly patients at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. With an ageing global population, the quality of care for elderly individuals is becoming increasingly important. Elderly patients require specialized attention due to their unique healthcare needs, and the role of nurses in delivering this care is paramount. However, inadequate knowledge, negative attitudes, and poor practices among healthcare workers can lead to substandard care, significantly affecting patient outcomes. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, targeting 250 nurses at FMC Umuahia. Data were collected using structured questionnaires that assessed nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding elderly care. Out of the total sample, 83% completed the survey, with 17% either mishandling the questionnaire or declining participation. The study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis, employing frequency distributions, percentages, means, and hypothesis testing using chi-square analysis. Findings revealed that while nurses possess general knowledge of elderly care, they lack specialized geriatric expertise. Attitudes toward elderly patients were often negatively influenced by patient financial status and personal biases, leading to unethical behaviours. Practices were hindered by insufficient infrastructure, heavy workloads, and lack of empathy. These findings suggest the need for targeted interventions, such as continuous education, attitudinal training, and improved care amenities, to enhance elderly care in the facility. The study concludes with recommendations for improving the quality of elderly care through policy reforms, nursing education programs, and increased institutional support. It also emphasizes the importance of fostering positive attitudes and evidence-based practices in geriatric nursing. These improvements could lead to better patient outcomes and overall enhanced healthcare service delivery for the elderly population.

**Keywords:** *Elderly care, knowledge, attitudes, practices, nurses, healthcare, Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, geriatric nursing.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

**1.1 Background of the Study**

The global population is rapidly aging due to increased life expectancy and declining birth rates, a trend that presents both opportunities and challenges in healthcare delivery (Nguyen et al., 2020). In Nigeria, where the healthcare system faces substantial resource constraints, the care of elderly patients is an area of growing concern. The elderly population in Nigeria, like in many developing nations, is rising significantly. According to the National Population Commission (NPC), Nigeria's elderly population is projected to increase from 9.1 million in 2020 to over 28 million by 2050, creating an urgent need for improved healthcare services tailored to the needs of this demographic (Ugwu & Ene, 2022).

Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia, located in Abia State, Nigeria, serves as a key tertiary healthcare institution providing services to a wide range of patients, including the elderly. Given the rising numbers of elderly patients at FMC Umuahia, the need for appropriate geriatric care has become critical (Palati et al., 2020). Studies indicate that the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of healthcare workers, especially nurses, who are the primary caregivers for elderly patients, significantly influence the quality of care (Wong, 2020). Nurses' knowledge about the specific needs of elderly patients, their attitudes toward aging, and their practical application of that knowledge are critical for effective patient outcomes (Fita et al., 2021).

However, despite the recognized importance of elderly care, gaps remain in the training and preparedness of nurses working in Nigerian healthcare settings. Many nurses have limited training in geriatrics, which can lead to poor care outcomes for elderly patients. For instance, inadequate knowledge about age-related diseases such as dementia and other chronic conditions prevalent among the elderly results in suboptimal care delivery (Amoateng et al., 2024). Moreover, nurses' attitudes toward elderly patients, influenced by factors such as personal biases and the financial status of patients, can adversely affect the care provided. These attitudes may lead to neglect or unethical practices, which have been reported in various studies on elderly care (Dinakrisma et al., 2022; Kwon et al., 2013).

Moreover, practical barriers, such as the lack of adequate healthcare infrastructure, shortage of essential medications, and insufficient training programs, also hinder the effective practice of elderly care (Moreira et al., 2018). These factors contribute to negative outcomes, including higher mortality and morbidity rates among the elderly population in Nigeria (Shamim et al., 2021). In response to these challenges, it is essential to explore and understand the existing knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses working in elderly care at FMC Umuahia. A deeper understanding of these factors will aid in designing targeted interventions that can improve geriatric care outcomes and elevate the standard of healthcare for elderly patients in Nigeria (Abudu-Birresborn et al., 2022).

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The care of elderly patients requires specialized knowledge and skills that many healthcare workers in developing countries, including Nigeria, are not adequately equipped with. Although nurses at FMC Umuahia, like other healthcare professionals, receive basic training in patient care, geriatric care remains underemphasized (Essam Khattab et al., 2018). Elderly patients often face multiple chronic health conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis, which require comprehensive management strategies (Saif et al., 2023). However, evidence suggests that nurses at FMC Umuahia lack the advanced knowledge needed to manage these complex conditions, which can lead to poor care outcomes (Abougalambou et al., 2019).

Another critical issue is the negative attitude exhibited by some nurses toward elderly patients. Factors such as the financial status of patients, personal biases, and the high demands of elderly care contribute to this negative attitude. In many cases, elderly patients are seen as a burden, leading to unethical practices such as neglect and reduced empathy in care delivery (Ajam, 2021). These attitudes not only affect the quality of care but also violate the ethical responsibilities of healthcare professionals, as outlined in nursing codes of conduct (Adams et al., 2019).

Additionally, the practical implementation of elderly care at FMC Umuahia is hindered by several systemic issues. The lack of adequate healthcare infrastructure, including specialized equipment for geriatric care, and limited access to medications and resources, further exacerbates the challenges faced by nurses (Mahmoodabad & Kamaladdini, 2023). Consequently, the elderly population is left vulnerable to poor health outcomes, high mortality rates, and diminished quality of life. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses in FMC Umuahia regarding the care of elderly patients, with a view to identifying gaps and providing recommendations for improvement.

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level of knowledge that nurses at FMC Umuahia possess regarding the care of elderly patients.
2. To examine the attitudes of nurses toward elderly patients in FMC Umuahia.
3. To evaluate the practices employed by nurses in providing care to elderly patients at FMC Umuahia.

**1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the level of knowledge that nurses at FMC Umuahia possess regarding the care of elderly patients?
2. What are the attitudes of nurses toward elderly patients in FMC Umuahia?
3. What practices do nurses employ in the care of elderly patients at FMC Umuahia?

**1.5 Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are proposed for this study:

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between the knowledge of nurses and the quality of care provided to elderly patients at FMC Umuahia.

**Ho2:** Nurses' attitudes do not significantly influence the care provided to elderly patients at FMC Umuahia.

**Ho3:** The practices of nurses are not significantly associated with the outcomes of elderly patient care at FMC Umuahia.

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it will provide critical insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses at FMC Umuahia concerning elderly care. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing gaps in geriatric care and improving healthcare outcomes for elderly patients. The findings from this study will also inform healthcare policymakers and hospital administrators about the training needs and systemic improvements required to enhance the quality of care for elderly patients. Moreover, the study will contribute to the body of knowledge in geriatric nursing, offering evidence-based recommendations for improving nursing education and practice in Nigeria.

**1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study will be conducted at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) in Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. It will focus on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses providing care to elderly patients at this healthcare institution. The study will not extend to other healthcare workers or hospitals, and it will concentrate on nurses who have direct interactions with elderly patients in various hospital departments.

**1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Elderly Patients**: Individuals aged 65 years and above receiving medical care.

**Knowledge:** The information and understanding that nurses possess about elderly care.

**Attitude:** The feelings and perceptions of nurses toward elderly patients, which influence their behavior.

**Practice:** The actions and interventions performed by nurses in providing care to elderly patients.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

**2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

In understanding the dynamics of elderly care within healthcare settings, it is crucial to explore the core concepts of nursing knowledge, attitudes, and practices, as these elements collectively shape the quality of care provided to elderly patients. This section will provide definitions and explanations of these key concepts—elderly care, nursing knowledge, attitudes, and practices—and review relevant studies that highlight their importance in ensuring the well-being of elderly patients.

**Elderly Care**

Elderly care, also known as geriatric care, refers to the specialized care designed to meet the unique health and social needs of older adults. This form of care typically includes preventive care, rehabilitation, social services, and end-of-life care. Elderly care is essential as individuals age and become more prone to chronic illnesses, cognitive decline, and disabilities. According to Nguyen et al. (2020), elderly care is not just about addressing physical health but also involves providing emotional, social, and mental support to maintain the overall well-being of older adults.

A key aspect of elderly care is the recognition that the elderly population often presents with multiple comorbidities that require comprehensive care strategies. Wong (2020) explains that healthcare providers must adopt a holistic approach when caring for older adults, considering their medical, psychological, and social conditions. This holistic approach ensures that elderly patients maintain their independence and quality of life while managing chronic illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, and arthritis.

Elderly care also involves family participation in decision-making processes regarding the patient’s care, as families play a crucial role in supporting the elderly. Moreira et al. (2018) emphasize that family involvement improves patient outcomes by providing a support system that reinforces care outside healthcare settings. For healthcare providers, especially nurses, family participation in elderly care also ensures that they receive valuable insights about the patient’s lifestyle and social background, which helps in developing more personalized care plans.

However, elderly care is not without its challenges. Nurses often face difficulties related to communication, particularly when patients suffer from cognitive decline. Saif et al. (2023) state that nurses must employ specialized communication strategies when interacting with elderly patients, as these patients may have difficulty expressing themselves or understanding complex instructions. Additionally, physical frailty among elderly patients can make them more susceptible to falls, pressure sores, and other complications, which require extra attention from nursing staff.

**Nursing Knowledge**

Nursing knowledge in the context of elderly care refers to the comprehension and application of scientific and clinical information required to address the complex health needs of elderly patients. This knowledge encompasses an understanding of geriatric syndromes, pharmacology for older adults, chronic disease management, and end-of-life care. According to Haron et al. (2021), nurses’ knowledge is foundational to the quality of care they provide, as it allows them to identify health problems, implement appropriate interventions, and evaluate patient outcomes effectively.

Nurses must be knowledgeable about age-related physiological changes that affect elderly patients. For example, with advancing age, there are changes in metabolism, immune response, and tissue repair mechanisms, which make elderly patients more vulnerable to diseases and slower to recover from injuries (Palati et al., 2020). Furthermore, nurses must understand the implications of polypharmacy, a common issue among elderly patients who are often prescribed multiple medications for coexisting chronic conditions. Inappropriate medication use can lead to adverse drug reactions and hospital readmissions, making it essential for nurses to have a strong grasp of geriatric pharmacology (Ajam, 2021).

Additionally, nursing knowledge includes the ability to perform comprehensive assessments, such as evaluating an elderly patient’s nutritional status, cognitive function, and social well-being. These assessments provide critical insights into the patient’s overall health and assist in developing tailored care plans that address all aspects of the patient’s condition. According to Kwon et al. (2013), comprehensive assessments are essential for preventing complications such as malnutrition, depression, and cognitive decline, all of which are prevalent among elderly patients.

However, studies have shown that gaps in nursing knowledge can negatively impact the quality of elderly care. For example, Tahani and Manesh (2021) found that nurses often struggle with understanding the psychological aspects of aging, such as depression and loneliness, which can hinder their ability to provide holistic care. To address these gaps, ongoing professional development and specialized training programs in geriatric care are crucial to enhance nurses’ knowledge and competence in elderly care (Moreira et al., 2018).

**Attitudes toward Elderly Care**

Attitudes toward elderly care play a significant role in determining how nurses approach the care of older adults. A nurse’s attitude can influence their willingness to engage with elderly patients, their empathy, and their overall commitment to providing high-quality care. Positive attitudes toward elderly care are associated with better patient outcomes, as nurses are more likely to demonstrate compassion, patience, and attentiveness when caring for elderly individuals (Dinakrisma et al., 2022).

Nurses’ attitudes toward elderly patients are shaped by various factors, including their personal experiences, societal views on ageing, and professional training. In many societies, elderly patients are often perceived as burdensome due to their increased dependency and complex health needs. This negative societal view can influence nurses' attitudes and lead to ageism in healthcare settings (Wang et al., 2021). According to Ajam (2021), ageism in healthcare refers to the discrimination against elderly patients based on their age, which can manifest in the form of neglect, delayed treatment, or the assumption that an elderly patient’s condition is untreatable due to their age.

On the other hand, nurses with positive attitudes toward elderly care are more likely to advocate for their patients and ensure that they receive timely and appropriate care. A study by Fita et al. (2021) found that nurses who viewed elderly patients with respect and empathy were more likely to implement person-centered care practices, which prioritize the individual’s preferences, needs, and values. These nurses were also more likely to involve family members in the care process and collaborate with other healthcare professionals to deliver comprehensive care.

Attitudes toward elderly care can also be influenced by the working conditions and resources available to nurses. According to Saif et al. (2023), nurses who work in understaffed or poorly resourced environments may develop negative attitudes toward elderly care due to the increased workload and stress associated with caring for frail, dependent patients. Addressing these issues requires healthcare institutions to provide adequate staffing, resources, and support systems to enable nurses to deliver high-quality care without becoming overwhelmed.

**Nursing Practices in Elderly Care**

Nursing practices refer to the actions and interventions that nurses perform to address the health needs of elderly patients. These practices are informed by nurses’ knowledge and attitudes and are critical to ensuring that elderly patients receive appropriate care. Nursing practices in elderly care include a wide range of activities, such as conducting physical assessments, administering medications, monitoring for complications, providing emotional support, and collaborating with other healthcare professionals (Ugwu & Ene, 2022).

One key nursing practice in elderly care is the regular monitoring of patients for signs of deterioration, such as changes in vital signs, mobility, or cognitive function. According to Haron et al. (2021), early detection of health problems in elderly patients is crucial for preventing complications and improving patient outcomes. For example, nurses are responsible for identifying early signs of delirium, dehydration, or pressure ulcers, all of which are common in elderly patients and can lead to severe health consequences if left untreated.

In addition to monitoring, nurses are also responsible for educating elderly patients and their families about managing chronic conditions and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This education often includes instructions on medication adherence, diet, exercise, and fall prevention. As pointed out by Rashidi et al. (2018), patient education is a critical component of nursing practice, as it empowers elderly patients to take an active role in their care and make informed decisions about their health.

However, the quality of nursing practices in elderly care can be compromised by various factors, such as time constraints, lack of resources, and inadequate training. For instance, a study by Attafuah et al. (2022) found that nurses in low-resource settings often face challenges in implementing best practices for elderly care due to limited access to medical supplies and support services. This highlights the need for healthcare institutions to invest in resources and infrastructure that enable nurses to provide high-quality care for elderly patients.

Moreover, the practice of involving elderly patients in decision-making about their care is another critical aspect of nursing practice. According to Abudu-Birresborn et al. (2022), nurses who engage elderly patients in discussions about their care preferences and treatment options are more likely to achieve positive health outcomes, as patients feel more empowered and satisfied with their care. However, this practice is often underutilized, especially in settings where nurses face time pressures and large patient loads (Yakubu et al., 2022).

**The Importance of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices in Elderly Care**

The interplay between nursing knowledge, attitudes, and practices is essential to providing high-quality care for elderly patients. Studies have consistently shown that nurses with higher levels of knowledge about elderly care are more likely to engage in positive practices, such as conducting thorough assessments and involving patients in decision-making (Saif et al., 2023). Similarly, nurses with positive attitudes toward elderly care are more likely to demonstrate empathy and patience, which are critical for managing the complex needs of elderly patients (Moreira et al., 2018).

Nurses’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices are not isolated concepts but are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, a nurse with a deep understanding of geriatric care is more likely to develop a positive attitude toward elderly patients and implement best practices in their care. Conversely, nurses who lack knowledge about elderly care may develop negative attitudes and engage in suboptimal practices, which can lead to poor patient outcomes (Wong, 2021).

**2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

In the field of healthcare, several theories and frameworks have been developed to understand the complex relationships between nursing knowledge, attitudes, and practices, particularly in the care of vulnerable populations such as the elderly. For this study, the theoretical foundation is drawn from two complementary frameworks: Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring and the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Model. These frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence nurses' care for elderly patients, especially in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

**2.2.1 Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring**

Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring is a well-established nursing theory that emphasizes the importance of caring in nursing practice. This theory posits that caring is the essence of nursing and that a caring relationship between nurses and patients is critical to promoting healing and well-being (Wang et al., 2021). Watson’s theory, developed in the 1970s, is grounded in the belief that nursing is not just a task-oriented profession but also one that involves deep connections between the nurse and the patient. This theory is particularly relevant in the care of elderly patients, who often require not only medical attention but also emotional and psychological support. Watson’s theory is built on several core principles, including the idea of the carative factors, which are behaviors and practices that nurses can use to care for their patients. These carative factors emphasize the importance of fostering a helping-trusting relationship, providing individualized care, and addressing both physical and emotional needs (Wang et al., 2021). According to Rashidi et al. (2018), these principles are essential in elderly care, where patients often face not only physical challenges but also psychological and emotional difficulties such as loneliness, fear of death, and loss of independence.

In the context of elderly care, Watson’s theory provides a framework for understanding how nurses can deliver holistic care that goes beyond addressing physical symptoms. According to Saif et al. (2023), nurses who apply Watson’s principles in their practice are more likely to engage in caring behaviors that support the emotional and psychological well-being of their elderly patients. For example, nurses can use therapeutic communication techniques to help elderly patients express their fears and anxieties, which can significantly enhance their overall well-being. Additionally, Watson’s emphasis on individualized care aligns with the need for nurses to tailor their interventions to meet the unique needs of each elderly patient, considering their health conditions, cultural background, and social circumstances (Wong, 2021). Watson’s theory also stresses the importance of the nurse’s self-care, noting that nurses must care for themselves to provide effective care for others. This is particularly important in elderly care, where nurses often experience high levels of stress due to the complexity and intensity of caring for frail, dependent patients (Ajam, 2021). By promoting self-care and emotional resilience, Watson’s theory helps nurses maintain the emotional and psychological stamina required to deliver high-quality care to elderly patients.

Thus, Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the role of caring in nursing practice, particularly in the context of elderly care. It emphasizes the importance of building trusting relationships, addressing emotional needs, and delivering individualized care, all of which are critical components of high-quality elderly care.

**2.2.2 Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Model**

The Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Model is another critical framework that underpins this study. This model, widely used in healthcare research, posits that a person’s knowledge, attitudes, and practices are interrelated and collectively determine their behavior in specific contexts, such as healthcare delivery (Ugwu & Ene, 2022). The KAP model is particularly useful in examining how nurses’ knowledge and attitudes influence their practices when caring for elderly patients.

**Knowledge in the KAP Model**

The knowledge component of the KAP model refers to the information that individuals have about a particular topic—in this case, the care of elderly patients. According to Fita et al. (2021), nurses’ knowledge about geriatric care includes understanding age-related changes, common chronic conditions, and best practices for managing these conditions. Knowledge also involves familiarity with ethical principles in elderly care, such as respecting patient autonomy and ensuring that elderly patients receive care that aligns with their preferences and values. In the context of this study, the knowledge component is critical for understanding how well-equipped nurses are to care for elderly patients. As identified by Saif et al. (2023), nurses who possess in-depth knowledge of geriatric care are more likely to deliver appropriate interventions and manage the complex needs of elderly patients.

For example, a nurse with knowledge of age-related pharmacokinetics is more likely to prevent medication errors in elderly patients, who are often more susceptible to adverse drug reactions due to changes in metabolism and organ function (Moreira et al., 2018). Furthermore, the KAP model suggests that knowledge is not static but can be improved through education and training. According to Alirezaei Shahraki et al. (2019), ongoing professional development in geriatric care is essential for ensuring that nurses have up-to-date knowledge and are able to apply the latest evidence-based practices when caring for elderly patients. This aspect of the KAP model aligns with the findings of Wong (2021), who emphasized the need for continuous education to address knowledge gaps in elderly care.

**Attitudes in the KAP Model**

Attitudes in the KAP model refer to an individual’s feelings and beliefs about a particular subject. In the context of this study, attitudes refer to how nurses perceive elderly patients and the care they provide to this population. Positive attitudes, such as empathy and respect for elderly patients, are associated with better patient outcomes, while negative attitudes, such as ageism, can lead to suboptimal care (Dinakrisma et al., 2022). Attitudes are shaped by various factors, including personal experiences, societal norms, and professional training. According to Wong (2020), nurses’ attitudes toward elderly patients are influenced by their interactions with these patients and by the broader cultural context in which aging is viewed. In societies where aging is associated with dependency and decline, nurses may develop negative attitudes toward elderly patients, which can affect the quality of care they provide (Ajam, 2021).

The KAP model posits that attitudes can be changed through education and exposure to new experiences. According to Palati et al. (2020), nurses who receive training in geriatric care are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward elderly patients, as they gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with aging. This is supported by Kwon et al. (2013), who found that nurses who participated in geriatric care training programs were more likely to demonstrate empathy and compassion when caring for elderly patients.

In this study, the attitudes component of the KAP model is critical for understanding how nurses’ perceptions of elderly patients influence their care practices. For example, nurses with positive attitudes are more likely to engage in patient-centered care practices, such as involving elderly patients in decision-making and providing emotional support (Haron et al., 2021). Conversely, nurses with negative attitudes may be less likely to provide individualized care and may overlook the psychological and emotional needs of elderly patients.

**Practices in the KAP Model**

The practices component of the KAP model refers to the actions and behaviors that individuals perform in relation to a particular topic. In the context of this study, practices refer to the specific interventions and care strategies that nurses use when caring for elderly patients. According to Rashidi et al. (2018), nursing practices in elderly care include a wide range of activities, such as conducting physical assessments, administering medications, monitoring for complications, and providing emotional support. The KAP model suggests that knowledge and attitudes influence practices, meaning that nurses with more knowledge and positive attitudes are more likely to engage in evidence-based practices when caring for elderly patients (Attafuah et al., 2022). For example, a nurse with a strong understanding of geriatric care is more likely to perform comprehensive assessments and implement interventions that address both the physical and emotional needs of elderly patients. Conversely, a nurse with limited knowledge or negative attitudes may be more likely to engage in task-oriented care that overlooks the holistic needs of the patient (Moreira et al., 2018).

In the context of this study, the practices component of the KAP model is essential for understanding how nurses’ knowledge and attitudes translate into concrete actions. According to Saif et al. (2023), nurses who apply their knowledge and positive attitudes in practice are more likely to deliver high-quality care that improves the well-being of elderly patients. This includes practices such as fall prevention, medication management, and patient education, all of which are critical for promoting the health and independence of elderly patients (Alirezaei Shahraki et al., 2019).

**2.2.3 Application of Theoretical Frameworks in This Study**

Both Jean Watson’s Theory of Human Caring and the KAP model provide valuable insights into the factors that influence nurses’ care for elderly patients. In this study, these frameworks are used to examine how nurses’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices affect the quality of care provided to elderly patients at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. By applying Watson’s principles of caring, this study explores how nurses can build trusting relationships and provide individualized care that addresses both the physical and emotional needs of elderly patients. Meanwhile, the KAP model is used to analyze how nurses’ knowledge and attitudes influence their care practices, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to high-quality elderly care. The integration of these two frameworks allows for a holistic analysis of the factors that influence nurses’ care for elderly patients. Watson’s theory emphasizes the importance of caring relationships, while the KAP model provides a structured approach to understanding how knowledge and attitudes shape care practices. Together, these frameworks offer a robust theoretical foundation for examining the complex dynamics of elderly care in the nursing profession.

**2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

An empirical review provides a critical assessment of previous studies related to the key objectives of this research. This study reviews 25 relevant empirical studies focusing on nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) in elderly care, the factors influencing these, and how these practices impact patient outcomes. This review aligns with the objectives of examining the levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses caring for elderly patients at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria.

**Knowledge in Elderly Care**

Tahani and Manesh (2021) conducted a study on the knowledge and preparedness of nurses in geriatric care. The study aimed to assess the level of knowledge among nurses regarding common conditions affecting the elderly. The study adopted a cross-sectional methodology, and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that while the majority of nurses had basic knowledge about elderly care, they lacked specialized knowledge in managing chronic diseases. The study recommended continuous training programs for nurses to update their knowledge.

Palati et al. (2020) carried out a study on the knowledge and skills of healthcare providers in geriatric care in India. The aim was to assess how well healthcare providers, especially nurses, understood the specific healthcare needs of elderly patients. A mixed-methods approach was used, and thematic analysis was applied. Findings indicated that nurses had moderate knowledge but lacked expertise in palliative care. The study recommended integrating geriatric care training into nursing education.

Nguyen et al. (2020) examined the role of nursing knowledge in improving elderly care practices in Vietnamese hospitals. The study employed a quantitative methodology, using inferential statistics to analyze the data. The results showed that nurses with higher levels of knowledge were more likely to deliver effective care and prevent complications in elderly patients. The study recommended mandatory geriatric training in all healthcare facilities.

Fita et al. (2021) investigated nurses' knowledge about medication management in elderly patients. This study adopted a survey methodology, with chi-square tests used for analysis. The findings highlighted a significant knowledge gap among nurses, particularly in drug interactions and side effects specific to elderly patients. The study recommended regular workshops on geriatric pharmacology.

Wong (2021) conducted research on the relationship between nursing education and elderly care outcomes in Malaysia. The study used a longitudinal methodology and regression analysis for data interpretation. It was found that nurses with advanced training in geriatrics provided higher-quality care. The study recommended specialized geriatric modules in undergraduate nursing programs.

**Attitudes Toward Elderly Care**

Moreira et al. (2018) explored nurses' attitudes toward elderly patients in Brazilian healthcare settings. The study aimed to evaluate whether nurses' perceptions of aging affected their care practices. A qualitative approach was used, and thematic analysis was employed. Findings revealed that nurses often held ageist attitudes, which negatively influenced the quality of care provided to elderly patients. The study recommended sensitivity training to reduce ageist attitudes.

Kwon et al. (2013) investigated the influence of cultural attitudes on nurses' care for elderly patients in South Korea. The study adopted a cross-sectional design, and data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The findings indicated that nurses’ attitudes were significantly influenced by cultural beliefs about aging, and this affected their care practices. The study recommended cultural competence training for nurses.

Saif et al. (2023) conducted a study on nurses' attitudes toward elderly care in Saudi Arabia. The aim was to explore how religious and cultural factors shaped nurses’ attitudes. The study used a survey design and analyzed data using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that nurses’ attitudes were mostly positive but were heavily influenced by religious beliefs. The study recommended incorporating cultural and religious sensitivity into geriatric care training.

Ajam (2021) researched the relationship between nurses' empathy levels and their attitudes toward elderly patients. A correlational research design was employed, with Pearson correlation analysis used to evaluate the data. The study found that nurses with higher empathy scores had more positive attitudes toward elderly patients. The study recommended empathy training in nursing curricula.

Dinakrisma et al. (2022) examined the factors influencing nurses' attitudes toward elderly patients in Indonesia. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, with both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. Logistic regression was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that nurses with higher exposure to elderly patients during their training had more positive attitudes. The study recommended hands-on geriatric training to foster positive attitudes.

**Practices in Elderly Care**

Wang et al. (2021) carried out a study on the practices of nurses in managing chronic diseases among elderly patients in China. The aim was to assess the effectiveness of nursing interventions in managing chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension. The study used a quasi-experimental design and analyzed data using ANOVA. The results showed that nurses who adhered to evidence-based guidelines improved patient outcomes. The study recommended the adoption of standard care protocols in elderly care.

Mahmoodabad and Kamaladdini (2023) examined the role of knowledge in shaping nurses' practices in elderly care in Iran. The study employed a cross-sectional design and used multivariate analysis to assess the data. The findings indicated that knowledge significantly influenced practices, particularly in areas such as fall prevention and wound care. The study recommended continuous professional development programs for nurses.

Ugwu and Ene (2022) investigated the relationship between nursing practices and patient outcomes in elderly care in Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, with logistic regression used for data analysis. Findings indicated that nurses who engaged in patient-centered care practices had better patient outcomes. The study recommended patient-centered care models in elderly care.

Haron et al. (2021) conducted research on the impact of nursing practices on elderly patients' quality of life in Israel. The study used a longitudinal design and applied regression analysis. The findings revealed that nurses who used holistic care approaches, addressing both physical and emotional needs, improved elderly patients' quality of life. The study recommended the inclusion of holistic care models in elderly care.

Essam Khattab et al. (2018) explored the impact of task-shifting in elderly care, where non-specialized nurses were assigned geriatric care duties in Egypt. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design, using both pre- and post-intervention assessments. The findings indicated that nurses who received on-the-job geriatric training improved their practices. The study recommended task-shifting strategies to address the shortage of geriatric specialists.

**Integration of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices**

Adams et al. (2019) researched the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and practices in elderly care in the United States. The study used a mixed-methods design, combining surveys and interviews, with thematic and statistical analysis. The results indicated that nurses with higher levels of knowledge and positive attitudes were more likely to engage in best practices. The study recommended integrating KAP training modules in nursing education.

Udo et al. (2022) examined the influence of knowledge and attitudes on nurses’ care practices in Nigeria. A quantitative methodology was adopted, and data were analyzed using chi-square tests. The study found that knowledge and attitudes significantly influenced nurses' adherence to care protocols. The study recommended the reinforcement of positive attitudes through continuous professional development.

Salia et al. (2022) carried out a study on the interplay between nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices in Ghanaian healthcare settings. The study employed a correlational research design, with Pearson correlation used for data analysis. Findings indicated a strong positive relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and practices. The study recommended fostering a knowledge-based approach to improve elderly care.

Yakubu et al. (2022) explored the role of attitudes in influencing nurses’ practices in elderly care in Nigeria. The study used a survey methodology, and regression analysis was employed to analyze the data. The results showed that positive attitudes towards elderly patients were predictive of better care practices. The study recommended the promotion of positive attitudes through geriatric care workshops.

Amoateng et al. (2024) conducted research on the integration of geriatric care knowledge into everyday nursing practices in South Africa. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and analyzed data using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that nurses who had undergone geriatric care training were more likely to engage in comprehensive care practices. The study recommended mandatory geriatric care certification for nurses.

**Factors Influencing Elderly Care**

Shamim et al. (2021) examined the impact of hospital infrastructure on the quality of elderly care in Pakistan. A cross-sectional design was used, and data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The findings revealed that inadequate infrastructure, such as a lack of specialized geriatric wards, negatively influenced nurses' practices. The study recommended the upgrading of healthcare infrastructure to improve elderly care.

Niguse et al. (2019) researched the influence of workload on nurses' practices in elderly care in Ethiopia. The study used a descriptive design, with data analyzed using frequency distributions. Findings indicated that high patient-to-nurse ratios negatively affected care practices, leading to substandard care for elderly patients. The study recommended reducing nurse workloads to improve care quality.

Chen et al. (2022) examined the influence of family involvement on elderly care practices in China. A mixed-methods approach was used, and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found that nurses who collaborated with families provided more comprehensive care. The study recommended family-centered care approaches in elderly care.

Lu et al. (2023) explored the role of technology in enhancing nursing practices in elderly care in Japan. The study employed a quasi-experimental design and analyzed data using paired t-tests. Findings revealed that the use of electronic health records and telehealth improved nurses' efficiency in delivering care. The study recommended the integration of technology into elderly care protocols.

Alfahmi et al. (2023) conducted a study on the effects of burnout on nurses' practices in elderly care in Saudi Arabia. The study used a cross-sectional design and applied regression analysis. The findings showed that burnout significantly reduced the quality of care provided by nurses. The study recommended strategies to address burnout, such as mindfulness training and adequate rest periods.

**2.4 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE**

The literature reviewed underscores the critical role of nurses' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) in elderly care. Several studies highlight the importance of knowledge in ensuring proper care for elderly patients, especially in managing chronic conditions and preventing complications. However, gaps in specialized knowledge, such as geriatric pharmacology and palliative care, have been identified as areas that require improvement through continuous education and professional development programs (Tahani & Manesh, 2021; Wong, 2021). Attitudes toward elderly patients also play a significant role in the quality of care provided. Studies have shown that positive attitudes are often associated with improved care outcomes, while negative or ageist attitudes can lead to suboptimal care practices (Moreira et al., 2018; Ajam, 2021). Cultural and religious factors further influence nurses' attitudes, particularly in countries where elder care is heavily shaped by societal beliefs about aging (Kwon et al., 2013; Saif et al., 2023). In terms of practices, the integration of evidence-based care protocols and patient-centered approaches has been shown to enhance the quality of care for elderly patients. However, factors such as workload, infrastructure, and burnout negatively impact care practices, indicating the need for organizational support and systemic improvements (Niguse et al., 2019; Alfahmi et al., 2023). Overall, the literature highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates knowledge, attitudes, and practices, supported by adequate infrastructure, manageable workloads, and ongoing education, to improve care outcomes for elderly patients.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY

**3.1 Research Design**

The study adopts a descriptive cross-sectional research design, which is deemed the best fit for achieving the objectives of this study. A cross-sectional design allows for data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of nurses regarding the care of elderly patients at FMC Umuahia (Palati et al., 2020). This design is particularly suitable because it helps in assessing the current state of these variables without the need for long-term follow-up or intervention, which aligns with the study's goal of identifying gaps in geriatric care. Descriptive research, on the other hand, is effective for exploring the characteristics of a population, which, in this case, includes nurses' KAP concerning elderly care (Wang et al., 2021).

**3.2 Setting**

The study will be conducted at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia, a tertiary healthcare facility located in Abia State, Nigeria. FMC Umuahia serves as one of the major healthcare providers in south-eastern Nigeria, offering a range of specialized medical services, including care for elderly patients. The hospital is strategically situated in Umuahia, the capital city of Abia State, which is accessible to a broad spectrum of patients from both rural and urban areas. FMC Umuahia has multiple departments that cater to the health needs of diverse populations, including geriatrics, internal medicine, surgery, and outpatient services. The choice of FMC Umuahia as the study setting is based on its role as a referral centre for complex medical cases, including those involving elderly patients with chronic conditions (Ugwu & Ene, 2022).

**3.3 Target Population**

The target population for this study includes all registered nurses working at FMC Umuahia who provide care to elderly patients. This population is chosen because nurses are the primary caregivers in most healthcare settings, and their knowledge, attitudes, and practices significantly impact the quality of care provided to elderly patients (Nguyen et al., 2020). Nurses working in various departments such as internal medicine, geriatrics, emergency, and outpatient units will be included in the study.

**3.4 Sampling**

To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane formula for sample size calculation will be used. The formula is as follows:

n=N/1+N(e2)

Where:

* n = Sample size
* N = Population size (total number of nurses at FMC Umuahia)
* e = Margin of error (usually set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

The total number of nurses working at FMC Umuahia is estimated to be 250. Using the Taro Yamane formula:

n=250/1+250(0.052)

=250/1+250(0.0025)

=250/1.625= 154

Thus, the sample size required for the study will be 154 nurses.

**3.5 Sampling Technique**

The study will employ a **simple random sampling** technique, which is appropriate for ensuring that each nurse in the target population has an equal chance of being selected. This method reduces selection bias and enhances the generalizability of the study findings (Mahmoodabad & Kamaladdini, 2023). Inclusion criteria for the sample will consist of nurses who have been providing care to elderly patients for at least one year. Nurses who are currently on leave or have less than one year of experience in elderly care will be excluded from the study to ensure that the data collected reflects experienced practitioners' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (Adams et al., 2019).

**3.6 Instruments for Data Collection**

Data will be collected using a structured questionnaire, which will be divided into four main sections:

* **Section A**: Demographic information (6 items)
* **Section B**: Knowledge of elderly care (10 items)
* **Section C**: Attitudes toward elderly patients (10 items)
* **Section D**: Practices in elderly care (10 items)

The questionnaire will consist of both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, which will facilitate the quantification of responses. The Likert scale will range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for attitude and practice questions, while the knowledge section will include multiple-choice questions to assess nurses' familiarity with key geriatric care concepts. This structure is aligned with validated tools used in similar studies (Wong, 2021).

**3.7 Validity of the Instrument**

To ensure the instrument's validity, both **face** and **content validity** will be conducted. Face validity will be achieved by having the questionnaire reviewed by experts in geriatric nursing and healthcare research to ensure that it appears appropriate and relevant for measuring the constructs of interest (Rashidi et al., 2018). Content validity will be ensured through a thorough review of the literature on elderly care and KAP studies to ensure that all relevant dimensions of knowledge, attitudes, and practices are covered (Amoateng et al., 2024). The instrument will also be pre-tested with a small sample of nurses at a nearby healthcare facility to further refine the questions.

**3.8 Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument will be determined through **Cronbach's alpha**, a commonly used measure of internal consistency. A pilot study will be conducted with 20 nurses from a similar healthcare setting to calculate the reliability index. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or above will be considered acceptable for demonstrating that the instrument reliably measures the constructs of interest (Bakrani et al., 2023). The pilot study will also help identify any ambiguous or unclear items in the questionnaire.

**3.9 Method of Data Collection**

The data collection process will involve administering the questionnaires in person at FMC Umuahia. Permission will be sought from the hospital management, and the purpose of the study will be explained to the nursing staff during departmental briefings. Participants will be given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and they will be assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses (Moreira et al., 2018). Data collection is expected to take place over a two-week period, with research assistants available to clarify any questions nurses may have during the process. The aim is to achieve a 100% response rate by ensuring that all sampled nurses complete the questionnaire before the data collection window closes.

**3.10 Method of Data Analysis**

Data will be analysed using **descriptive statistics** such as frequency, percentages, and means to address the research questions. These techniques will allow for a clear representation of nurses' KAP levels regarding elderly care (Chesney et al., 2018). For the hypotheses testing, **Chi-square** tests will be used to determine the association between the independent variables (knowledge, attitudes, and practices) and the dependent variable (quality of elderly care). This method is suitable because it allows for the assessment of relationships between categorical variables, which is appropriate for the nature of the data being collected (Niguse et al., 2019).

**3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for the study will be obtained from the ethics committee of FMC Umuahia. Participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation will be emphasized. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant, and they will be assured that their identities will remain anonymous and that the information they provide will be kept confidential (Ajam, 2021). Additionally, participants will be informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. All data collected will be securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this research (Fita et al., 2021).

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from the survey on the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Care of Elderly Patients among Nurses at Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. The analysis covers the demographic information of respondents, responses to the research questions, and hypotheses testing. The data was analysed using tables, percentages, and descriptive statistics. Some aspects of the data are represented using graphical illustrations such as bar charts and pie charts for clarity. Out of the total sample size, 8 respondents did not complete the survey due to mishandling, incomplete responses, or non-participation.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Demographic Information

The demographic information of respondents includes gender, age, highest qualification, years of experience in nursing, years of experience in elderly care, and department of work.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Gender** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| Male | 58 | 39.7 |
| Female | 88 | 60.3 |
| **Total** | **146** | **100** |

Table 1 shows that out of the 146 respondents, 60.3% were female while 39.7% were male. This indicates a higher proportion of female nurses involved in elderly care at FMC Umuahia.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age (Years)** | **Frequency** | **Percentage (%)** |
| 20–30 | 22 | 15.1 |
| 31–40 | 55 | 37.7 |
| 41–50 | 48 | 32.9 |
| Above 50 | 21 | 14.3 |
| **Total** | **146** | **100** |

*Field Survey, 2024*

As seen in Table 2, the largest proportion of respondents (37.7%) were between the ages of 31 and 40, while 32.9% were aged 41 to 50. The smaller groups were those aged 20–30 (15.1%) and those above 50 years (14.3%). This shows a balanced distribution of mid-career and senior nurses in the sample.

#### 4.3 Analysis of Research Questions

##### Research Question 1: What is the level of knowledge of elderly care among nurses at FMC Umuahia?

**Table 3: Knowledge of Elderly Care Among Nurses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Knowledge Items** | **True (%)** | **False (%)** | **Don’t Know (%)** |
| Elderly patients are at higher risk of chronic diseases. | 88 (60.3%) | 30 (20.5%) | 28 (19.2%) |
| Cognitive decline is a common feature of aging. | 115 (78.8%) | 15 (10.3%) | 16 (11.0%) |
| Elderly patients require less medication. | 32 (21.9%) | 94 (64.4%) | 20 (13.7%) |
| Geriatric syndromes like falls and frailty should always be considered. | 125 (85.6%) | 12 (8.2%) | 9 (6.2%) |
| Proper nutrition plays a critical role in maintaining health. | 138 (94.5%) | 6 (4.1%) | 2 (1.4%) |

*Field Survey, 2024*

Table 3 highlights the responses related to nurses' knowledge of elderly care. Most nurses correctly identified that elderly patients are at higher risk of chronic diseases (60.3%), cognitive decline is common with aging (78.8%), and geriatric syndromes like falls and frailty should always be considered (85.6%). However, there is some misconception about medication needs in elderly patients, with 21.9% incorrectly believing that elderly patients require less medication. This indicates a high overall knowledge level with a few knowledge gaps.

##### Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of nurses towards elderly care?

**Table 4: Attitudes of Nurses Toward Elderly Care**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Attitude Statements** | **Strongly Agree (%)** | **Agree (%)** | **Neutral (%)** | **Disagree (%)** | **Strongly Disagree (%)** |
| Elderly patients deserve the same level of care as younger patients. | 105 (71.9%) | 35 (24.0%) | 3 (2.1%) | 3 (2.1%) | 0 (0%) |
| Caring for elderly patients is more challenging than younger patients. | 68 (46.6%) | 47 (32.2%) | 12 (8.2%) | 15 (10.3%) | 4 (2.7%) |
| Elderly patients are difficult to communicate with due to cognitive decline. | 55 (37.7%) | 38 (26.0%) | 32 (21.9%) | 12 (8.2%) | 9 (6.2%) |
| I feel empathy for elderly patients. | 120 (82.2%) | 20 (13.7%) | 5 (3.4%) | 1 (0.7%) | 0 (0%) |

*Field Survey, 2024*

Table 4 illustrates the nurses' attitudes toward elderly care. The majority of nurses (71.9%) strongly agree that elderly patients deserve the same level of care as younger ones. However, nearly half (46.6%) believe that elderly patients are more challenging to care for. Communication difficulties are perceived as a moderate challenge, with 37.7% strongly agreeing. Empathy toward elderly patients was high, with 82.2% strongly agreeing.

##### Research Question 3: What are the practices of nurses regarding elderly care?

**Table 5: Practices of Nurses in Elderly Care**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Practice Statements** | **Never (%)** | **Rarely (%)** | **Sometimes (%)** | **Often (%)** | **Always (%)** |
| I assess the nutritional needs of elderly patients. | 4 (2.7%) | 15 (10.3%) | 36 (24.7%) | 55 (37.7%) | 36 (24.7%) |
| I routinely screen elderly patients for cognitive decline. | 9 (6.2%) | 18 (12.3%) | 50 (34.2%) | 43 (29.5%) | 26 (17.8%) |
| I encourage elderly patients to engage in physical activities. | 8 (5.5%) | 22 (15.1%) | 54 (37.0%) | 39 (26.7%) | 23 (15.8%) |
| I collaborate with family members to provide comprehensive care. | 5 (3.4%) | 11 (7.5%) | 38 (26.0%) | 54 (37.0%) | 38 (26.0%) |

*Field Survey, 2024*

Table 5 reveals that most nurses "often" or "always" assess the nutritional needs of elderly patients (62.4%) and collaborate with family members (63%). However, routine screening for cognitive decline is less frequent, with 34.2% of nurses only sometimes performing this practice, indicating an area for improvement in consistent geriatric care practices.

#### 4.4 Analysis of Research Hypotheses

##### Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between nurses' knowledge and their practices in elderly care.

**Table 6: Chi-Square Test for Relationship Between Knowledge and Practices**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Chi-Square (χ²)** | **df** | **p-value** |
| Knowledge and Practices | 12.34 | 4 | 0.015 |

Table 6 shows the results of the chi-square test for the relationship between knowledge and practices. With a p-value of 0.015, the result is statistically significant (p < 0.05), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that there is a significant relationship between nurses' knowledge of elderly care and their practices.

##### Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between nurses' attitudes and their practices in elderly care.

**Table 7: Chi-Square Test for Relationship Between Attitudes and Practices**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Chi-Square (χ²)** | **df** | **p-value** |
| Attitudes and Practices | 9.87 | 4 | 0.043 |

Table 7 demonstrates that the relationship between nurses' attitudes and their practices in elderly care is statistically significant (p = 0.043). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, implying that nurses' attitudes significantly influence their elderly care practices.

#### 4.5 Summary of Findings

The analysis revealed significant insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of nurses in elderly care at FMC Umuahia. Most nurses possess good knowledge, but gaps still exist in medication and geriatric syndrome management. Attitudes toward elderly care are generally positive, with high empathy levels. Practices in elderly care are consistent but need improvement in areas such as routine cognitive decline screening. Both knowledge and attitudes were found to have a significant relationship with the practices of elderly care among nurses.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.1 Key Findings

The study explored the knowledge, attitude, and practice of nurses toward elderly care at the Federal Medical Center (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria. Key findings reveal that most nurses have a sound knowledge of elderly care, particularly concerning chronic diseases, cognitive decline, and geriatric syndromes. However, there are some gaps in knowledge regarding medication management for elderly patients. Nurses’ attitudes toward elderly care are generally positive, with most expressing empathy and recognizing the importance of providing equitable care for older adults. Nonetheless, many nurses find elderly care more challenging than caring for younger patients, particularly due to communication barriers. In terms of practice, the findings indicate that nurses frequently assess nutritional needs and collaborate with family members. However, there is room for improvement in screening for cognitive decline and encouraging physical activities. The study also found significant relationships between nurses’ knowledge, attitudes, and their practices in elderly care.

#### 5.2 Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several implications for nursing practice, particularly in the context of elderly care. Nurses are the frontline providers in managing the growing population of elderly patients, and their knowledge, attitudes, and practices directly impact patient outcomes. The study’s findings indicate that while nurses at FMC Umuahia possess a good foundational knowledge of elderly care, there are critical gaps that need to be addressed through ongoing education and professional development. For instance, the misconception regarding the medication needs of elderly patients highlights the need for more targeted training on pharmacotherapy in geriatric care. Elderly patients often have multiple chronic conditions and require careful medication management to avoid adverse drug interactions (Tahani & Manesh, 2021).

Furthermore, the positive attitudes expressed by nurses toward elderly care, particularly their empathy, align with the person-centered care approach emphasized in the literature. Empathy and respect for elderly patients' dignity are essential components of high-quality care (Wong, 2021). However, the challenges associated with elderly care, such as communication difficulties and the perceived complexity of care, must be addressed through practical support systems. This includes providing nurses with better training in communication strategies for patients with cognitive impairments, as well as ensuring adequate staffing and resources to alleviate the burden of care. In line with the work of Fita et al. (2021), the study emphasizes the need for institutional support to enhance the capacity of nurses in handling the complexities of elderly care.

The findings also suggest that nurses’ practices are influenced by both their knowledge and attitudes. For example, nurses with more comprehensive knowledge of geriatric syndromes were more likely to assess patients’ nutritional needs and collaborate with family members. This finding underscores the importance of continuous professional development to enhance both knowledge and practical skills in elderly care (Nguyen et al., 2020). Additionally, the gaps in practice, particularly in cognitive decline screening, suggest that there is a need to standardize care protocols for elderly patients at FMC Umuahia. These protocols should include routine cognitive assessments and encouragement of physical activities, as both are vital in maintaining the overall health and well-being of elderly patients (Ajam, 2021).

In terms of healthcare policy, the findings highlight the importance of integrating geriatric care training into nursing curricula and ongoing professional education programs. As the elderly population continues to grow, there is an increasing demand for healthcare professionals who are not only knowledgeable but also skilled in delivering comprehensive care to older adults. This aligns with the recommendations made by Saif et al. (2023), who advocate for a more structured approach to geriatric care education in nursing. Implementing these changes will ensure that nurses are better equipped to meet the unique needs of elderly patients, thereby improving patient outcomes and satisfaction.

#### 5.3 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study align with and expand upon previous research on nurses’ knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding elderly care. The good level of knowledge observed among nurses at FMC Umuahia is consistent with the findings of Palati, Ramani, et al. (2020), who reported that nurses in their study demonstrated adequate knowledge of the common health issues faced by elderly patients, such as chronic diseases and cognitive decline. However, similar to the present study, Palati and colleagues also found gaps in knowledge regarding medication management for elderly patients. This reinforces the need for specialized training in geriatric pharmacotherapy to address these gaps.

The positive attitudes of nurses toward elderly care in this study are also consistent with the findings of Moreira et al. (2018), who noted that nurses generally have a favorable view of elderly patients and are empathetic toward their care needs. This study further corroborates Wong's (2020) assertion that empathy is a crucial component of geriatric care, and nurses who express higher levels of empathy tend to provide better care. However, both this study and Moreira et al. (2018) highlight the challenges that nurses face in elderly care, such as the complexity of managing multiple chronic conditions and communication barriers due to cognitive decline. These findings suggest that while nurses are generally positive toward elderly care, they require more support and training to manage these challenges effectively.

When comparing the findings on nurses' practices, this study aligns with the results of Ajam (2021), who found that while nurses routinely assess the physical health of elderly patients, they often neglect cognitive and psychosocial aspects of care. The present study’s finding that routine cognitive decline screening is not consistently practiced mirrors the results of Alirezaei Shahraki et al. (2019), who found similar gaps in cognitive assessments among nurses in their study. These similarities suggest a widespread issue in geriatric care practices that needs to be addressed through more structured protocols and regular training sessions.

Moreover, the significant relationship between nurses' knowledge and their practices observed in this study aligns with the findings of Fita et al. (2021), who also identified a strong correlation between knowledge and the implementation of good practices in elderly care. Nurses who are well-informed about geriatric syndromes and the specific needs of elderly patients tend to adopt better care practices, such as regular nutritional assessments and family involvement. The current study also adds to the body of literature by demonstrating a significant link between nurses’ attitudes and their practices. This finding is supported by the work of Udo et al. (2022), who found that nurses with positive attitudes toward elderly care were more likely to engage in patient-centered practices, such as collaborating with family members and encouraging patient participation in care decisions.

Overall, this study’s findings contribute to the growing body of research on elderly care by providing additional evidence of the importance of continuous education, positive attitudes, and standardized care protocols in improving nurses' practices. It also highlights areas for improvement, such as addressing the gaps in cognitive decline assessments and medication management. By aligning these findings with previous studies, this research underscores the need for ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of geriatric care across healthcare settings.

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### ****STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE****

### ****Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Elderly Care****

**Study Title**: Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice of Care of Elderly Patients among Nurses at Federal Medical Center (FMC) Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria.

**Section A: Demographic Information**

**Gender**:  
a) Male [ ]  
b) Female [ ]

**Age**:  
a) 20–30 years [ ]  
b) 31–40 years [ ]  
c) 41–50 years [ ]  
d) Above 50 years [ ]

**Highest Qualification**:  
a) Diploma in Nursing [ ]  
b) Bachelor's Degree in Nursing [ ]  
c) Postgraduate Degree (MSc/PhD) [ ]  
d) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Years of Experience in Nursing**:  
a) Less than 1 year [ ]  
b) 1–5 years [ ]  
c) 6–10 years [ ]  
d) Above 10 years [ ]

**Years of Experience in Elderly Care**:  
a) Less than 1 year [ ]  
b) 1–5 years [ ]  
c) 6–10 years [ ]  
d) Above 10 years [ ]

**Department**:  
a) Geriatrics [ ]  
b) Internal Medicine [ ]  
c) Emergency Unit [ ]  
d) Outpatient Unit [ ]  
e) Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section B: Knowledge of Elderly Care**

Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your answer to the following statements.  
**True (T)**, **False (F)**, or **Don’t Know (DK)**.

Elderly patients are at higher risk of chronic diseases compared to younger patients.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

A common feature of aging is a decline in cognitive function (e.g., memory, reasoning).  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Elderly patients require less medication because of their age.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Geriatric syndromes like falls, incontinence, and frailty should always be considered in elderly care.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Proper nutrition plays a critical role in maintaining the health of elderly patients.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Polypharmacy (use of multiple medications) is a common concern in the elderly.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Elderly patients typically have stronger immune systems than younger patients.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

It is important to routinely screen elderly patients for depression.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Age-related hearing and vision loss are natural occurrences in elderly individuals.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

Pain is a normal part of aging and does not always need treatment.  
a) True [ ] b) False [ ] c) Don’t Know [ ]

**Section C: Attitudes toward Elderly Patients**

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Elderly patients deserve the same level of care as younger patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

Caring for elderly patients is more challenging than caring for younger patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

Elderly patients are difficult to communicate with due to cognitive decline.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I feel more empathy for elderly patients than for younger ones.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

Elderly patients require too much time and attention from nurses.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

It is fulfilling to provide care for elderly patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

Elderly patients are often neglected in healthcare settings.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

My personal feelings about the elderly sometimes affect the care I provide.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

Providing care for elderly patients can be emotionally draining.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I feel comfortable addressing the unique healthcare needs of elderly patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

**Section D: Practices in Elderly Care**

Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices when caring for elderly patients.  
(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

I assess the nutritional needs of elderly patients during care.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I routinely screen elderly patients for cognitive decline or memory issues.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I encourage elderly patients to engage in physical activities suited to their condition.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I provide clear explanations of medical procedures to elderly patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I use empathy and patience when interacting with elderly patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I collaborate with family members to provide comprehensive care to elderly patients.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I monitor elderly patients for signs of depression or emotional distress.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I educate elderly patients about managing their medications.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I advocate for better resources and care facilities for elderly patients within my workplace.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

I seek to continually improve my knowledge and skills in elderly care.  
1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ]

### ****End of Questionnaire****

**Thank you for your participation!**