Care of the elderly and the dynamics of family values among the Urhobo people of the Niger delta, Nigeria

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This ethnographic study evaluated the extent to which dynamics in the Urhobo family system and values have influenced the nature of care given to the elderly. It explored modalities and strategies for effective care. The multistage sampling technique was used to select five (5) representative communities, Agbarho, Aladja, Effurun, Oghara and Orerokpe from the twenty-three (23) Urhobo Kingdoms. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted. Responses from the in-depth interviews and the Focus-Group Discussions were analyzed based on the key items listed on the Research Questions. The study revealed that there is a disintegration of the Urhobo indigenous family system and structure, which was a closely linked system, where families lived together and shared common values. But over the years the family system had suffered prevalent changes, such as break-down of the indigenous extended family system, disintegration of inter-generational interaction and family bonding and the migration of young adults from the larger family circle. These changes have largely been tied to civilization, modernization, education and technology (Western Acculturation) and have serious implications for the care of the elderly in the family system. The study also revealed that, Western Acculturation of the Urhobo people has constraint the care given to the elderly. The recommendation that joint efforts by Government and communities to provide community based facility for Elderly care was made and that community based “Senior Citizens Recreational Centers” be considered a possible option for Holistic care of the Elderly among the Urhobo Communities of the Niger Delta, Nigeria.

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