

# **Social Worker intervention to Social and Emotional elderly Well- being through the COVID-19 pandemic - An applied study on Miguel Leon Old Age Home in Cuenca**

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**Abstract:**

The study examines the social worker's intervention in the aging elderly population, focusing on their social and emotional well-being. The research used both quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews, at the Miguel Leon Old Age Home in Cuenca, Ecuador. Results show that most older adults live with their relatives, with a small percentage living alone. Social workers focus on optimizing the elderly's quality of life through activities promoting their social and emotional well-being, using professional tools like the Barthel Index, Lawton and Brody scales, and Mini-Mental Test.

**Keywords:** Elderly, Social work, Intervention, Family, Social, Emotional, Wellbeing, etc

**Introduction:**

In the research study of Martínez et al. (2016), Aging is a complex process influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. Each individual interprets changes differently, influenced by their mental schemas, personality structure, beliefs, values, socialization processes, and social and environmental context. This study analyzes social worker interventions in Miguel Leon Old Age Home, emphasizing the need for new strategies to provide care and monitoring for older adults during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Elderly Population:**

Older adults, including those over 65, are prioritized care groups, including those with disabilities, pregnant women, children, and adolescents. Legal subjects believe all older adults can engage socially, with rights, responsibilities, and responsibilities for themselves, family, environment, and descendants (Fernández 2012 (P. 3). The Constitution of Ecuador of 2008 provides a legal, conceptual, and ethical framework for coexistence among older adults, valuing each person's inherent worth in a society.

Article 36 prioritizes older adults in public and private spheres, focusing on social and economic inclusion and violence protection. Those aged 65 or older are considered elderly and deserve priority attention for active integration into society (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador 2008). The provision safeguards older people's health and care rights, enabling them to work and receive remuneration according to their needs, offering a 50% discount on goods and services, and respecting their culture.

The article emphasizes the shared responsibility of the family in providing physical, mental, and emotional support for older adults, respecting their rights, autonomy, and will, in accordance with Article 11 (Organic Law for Older Adults 2019, Chapter III).

- (a) Supporting the process of strengthening the abilities, skills, abilities and knowledge of older people.
- b) Promoting an affective environment that contributes to the elimination of violence.
- c) Meeting their basic needs: adequate nutrition, health, physical, mental, psychomotor, emotional and affective development.
- d) Protecting the elderly from any action or fact that threatens or violates their rights.
- e) Provide the elderly with spaces for recreation, culture and sports.
- f) To take care of their psycho-affective needs, whether they live in the family environment or not.
- g) Develop and strengthen capacities, skills, abilities, and personal and family practices for the care, nurturing, and full development of older adults in the family environment. (p.12)

**Social and Emotional well-being of Elderly:** Well-being research is crucial for older people, as they face limitations and increased diseases, requiring continued quality of life and development to maintain their quality of life (Rodríguez-Mateo et al 2016 p.22). Personal well-being refers to life satisfaction and happiness, encompassing successful aging. Reviewing older people's health helps understand their satisfaction, happiness, and life dynamics, enabling effective management of their aging process. The author's study on personal well-being in old age reveals that gender doesn't predict older adults' well-being, as their aspirations and desires shape their satisfaction with life, past, present, work, family, and other aspects (Carmona-Valdés 2009 p.58).

The Lawton and Brody Scale is an international tool used to assess the independence of older people, revealing signs of progressive loss of autonomy due to aging, particularly in cases of dementia or brain injury (Sanz, 2020). Ecuador's social workers use instruments like the Barthel Index and Lawton-Brody scale to measure the well-being of older people. The Barthel Index measures daily living activities and independence, while the Lawton-Brody scale measures independence, providing valuable information for intervention.

**Social Worker Intervention:** Intervention in social work involves organized actions from individual, family, and community areas to improve citizens' quality of life by addressing obstacles. The author discusses the social worker's work in restoring the rights of the elderly, focusing on socioeconomic imbalances and the societal and family harm caused by these groups (Mosquera 2017 p.70).

In a research conducted at the National University of Colombia by Falla-Ramírez (2017 p. 129) Social work intervention is a long-term process with goals and purposes that transcend aid and charity perspectives, not a spontaneous, immediate exercise. Social work intervention with older adults aims to fulfill potential and live a full life, but different intervention levels are needed due to the heterogeneity of older adults, not a homogeneous group (Rodríguez-Montañez and Manzanares-Méndez 2003 p.122)

The aging process varies based on social conditions, necessitating recommendations for improved living conditions and programs that encourage active involvement of older individuals in family and society. Senior centers serve as gathering spaces for generations, enhancing the aging process through family, intergenerational, sociocultural, recreational, productive, and lifestyle integration programs for active aging (Social Health Insurance, 2021, para.1).

The Ecuadorian government's "My Best Years" plan focuses on active and healthy aging, aiming to improve the quality of life for older adults, particularly those in vulnerable situations. It recognizes older people as rights holders and aims to eliminate myths hindering their development.

According to Lares Comunidad Valenciana (2018), the functions and main tasks of the social worker in the senior residence are:

- The center is responsible for planning and organizing social work by programming objectives previously carried out by management.
- Conducting a personal and family assessment of each resident.
- The task involves creating reports on each older adult who is currently in the center and updating them as needed.
- The center's management ensures proper pension collection and management of the pension of residents who require it.
- The social worker is responsible for facilitating the admission of a resident to a center and coordinating with all necessary agencies.

- The individual is responsible for meticulously documenting and analyzing the medical history and documentation of the elderly to ensure comprehensive understanding and monitoring of their progress.
- The organization is responsible for providing continuous advice and guidance to residents or their relatives, informing them of their rights and demanding their entitlements.
- The social worker will conduct an interview with an older adult upon their move into a residential home to assess their eligibility for admission.
- This will enhance the resident's integration and participation in the center, fostering better relationships between the family and their environment, preventing separation.
- The center team and professionals collaborate to create an individualized care plan for each resident, ensuring optimal care for elderly individuals.
- The social worker is focusing on the social and emotional well-being of the elderly, providing activities for each patient to enhance their health.
- The social worker, in collaboration with the center's management, is responsible for addressing suggestions and complaints to enhance the center's quality.
- A social worker is a member of a multidisciplinary team that provides comprehensive psychosocial care to residents and their families.
- The social worker ensures the personalization and intimacy of the elderly resident in the center, while upholding their dignity.

**Effect of COVID-19 in Elderly with social and emotional:** The COVID-19 pandemic is posing additional risks to older people, particularly those in nursing and residential care homes, with reports of neglect and abuse. Quarantined and those living with family members or caregivers are also at increased risk (United Nations research 2020 p.3).

Older people face health risks due to aging and aging-related health conditions, but also face loneliness and isolation, which affect their ability to respond to contagious illnesses like COVID-19. They may stop working, avoid social activities, and struggle with making purchases. This isolation can make them susceptible to infectious diseases (Callís-Fernández et al. 2020).

Restrictive preventive containment measures have been introduced to protect the elderly, but these measures can negatively impact their health, leading to physical inactivity, cognitive decline, loneliness, and emotional impairment. They no longer have the ability to engage in their usual activities and visit relatives.

### **Method**

**Research Design:** This descriptive non-experimental research focuses on describing the systematic characteristics of a situation (Tamayo 1999 p. 44). The analysis utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods, with qualitative data typically used in social sciences, and quantitative data also employed (Guerrero 2016 p. 2). This method employs data collection to test hypotheses through measurement and statistical analysis (Hernández, et al, 2014 p.4).

**Sample Size:** The population under study consisted of 180 older adults, and the sample was intentionally randomised. It consisted of 30 older adults from the Miguel Leon Old Age Home, which belongs to the municipality of Canton in the Azuay Province of Ecuador. Likewise, the social worker who works at the Miguel Leon Old Age Home was interviewed to learn more about the tools a social worker uses when intervening with older adults in the area of social and emotional well-being.

**Data Collection Tools:** The instrument of the guide was used, which, according to León (2002), "allows a reflective work for the organization of possible topics to be addressed in the interview" (p. 180), conducting an interview with 6 points with the social worker of the Miguel Leon Home for the Elderly. Likewise, the instrument of the questionnaire was used, Anguita (2003) expresses that "it is a form that contains the questions addressed to the people to be studied" (p.143), and so a 6-point questionnaire was used, addressed to the elderly in this center. The instruments were validated and reliable, as content validity of the study variables was performed.

**Data Collection Methods:** The study was conducted in person with older adults from November 2019 to December 2019, using a survey guide and interview technique. An online interview with a social worker was conducted, allowing for the identification of the social worker's intervention's importance in the socio-emotional well-being of the elderly. This method was useful in obtaining data on the elderly's needs and preferences González (1997 p.154).

**Data Analysis:** The data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel, tabulating participant responses during data collection.

**Results:**

**Table 1** Question: With whom do you live with ?

	<b>Respondents- Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Spouse</b>	10	33%
<b>Children</b>	15	50%
<b>Grandchildren</b>	2	7%
<b>Other family</b>	2	7%
<b>Single</b>	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

The study reveals that 50% of older adults live with their children, 33% with their spouse, 7% with grandchildren, 7% with other relatives, and 3% live alone at home, indicating caregiver responsibilities.

**Table 2** Question: Are you slightly unhappy with how frequently or infrequently you see your family members ?

	<b>Respondents- Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>I see them as often as I want</b>	10	33%
<b>Dissatisfied with how little I see it</b>	20	67%
<b>Total</b>	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

The study reveals that 50% of older adults live with their children, 33% with their spouse, 7% with grandchildren, 7% with other relatives, and 3% live alone at home.

**Table 3** Question: Why do you believe that family members avoid interacting with elderly people ?

	<b>Respondents- Numbers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Lack of Communication</b>	10	60%
<b>Family Problems</b>	18	33%
<b>Others</b>	2	7%
<b>Total</b>	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

60% of older adults feel guilty about their family members moving away due to lack of communication, with 33% citing past family problems. 7% of them report their children don't visit them due to work and the pandemic, but they still communicate through emails or phone calls.

Table 4 Question: Do you have the opportunity to talk to someone about your personal or family problems?

	Respondents- Numbers	Percentage
Yes	29	97%
No	1	3%
Total	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

97% of older adults have family support for personal or family problems due to Covid-19, while 3% lack support due to living alone and family's lack of importance.

Table 5 Question: When your family gets together, do you participate in all the activities?

	Respondents- Numbers	Percentage
Yes	28	93%
No	2	7%
Total	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

Older adults report high self-esteem when they integrate with family and participate in activities, while 7% feel unintegrated due to past family problems or illness.

Table 6 Question: Do you get help when you are sick ?

	Respondents- Numbers	Percentage
Yes	28	93%
No	2	7%
Total	30	100%

*(Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador)*

93% of respondents receive help from relatives during illness, while 7% don't due to living alone or past issues, requiring companionship to health centers.

**Interview with the Social Worker of Miguel Leon Old Age Home Cuenca Ecuador:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, an online interview was conducted with the social worker at Miguel Leon Home for the Elderly to assess her commitment to the elderly's social and emotional well-being.

The social worker's primary role is to assist the elderly in maintaining optimal functioning, addressing their unique needs and challenges. Their activities can be influenced by the individual, family, or environment, ensuring their well-being.

Direct intervention includes prevention, promotion, rehabilitation, and orientation functions. Prevention involves detecting

problems and implementing actions to prevent social problems. Social workers promote elderly skills development, reintegrate them without discrimination, and provide orientation and information on topics, procedures, and requirements.

Indirect care tasks involve inter-institutional coordination to obtain resources, such as coordinating with the registry office for missing ID cards. Community work improves resources. Social workers plan activities with the elderly and evaluate results. Training is crucial for continuous knowledge acquisition. Macro-level planning involves elderly, managers, and center staff.

**Question 1) What are the intervention models that you use in old care ?** The social worker's intervention should be evaluated for effectiveness and resource development post-implementation, focusing on achieving the set objectives.

**Question 2) What tools do you require to measure the social and emotional state of the elderly ?** As a social worker, I manage files and folders, including medical history and identity cards of elderly individuals. I create social files and prepare reports using scales like Barthel Index, Lawton-Brody, Mini-Mental, and Yesavage's Geriatric Depression Scale. These tools measure daily living activities, independence, cognitive decline, and dementia in the elderly. I also use Yesavage's Geriatric Depression Scale to assess depression, with scores ranging from 0 to 5.

**Question 3) What activities you do to promote the social and emotional well-being of older people ?** Activities involve families, family, art, culture, sports, motor skills, and dexterity, stimulating creativity and contributing to the well-being and self-esteem of the elderly.

**Question 4) How has the Covid-19 affected the social and emotional state of older adults ?** The elderly face physical, cognitive, intellectual, and emotional deterioration, losing mobility and being confined to their homes. This is difficult for them, who used to visit the Miguel Leon Old Age Home, as they cannot share time with their colleagues.

**Discussion:** Older people should ideally stay in their own home, filled with sentimental and personal memories, as it is the nucleus of the family and provides the best living environment (Morales-Martínez 2014 para.2). The older adults at Miguel Leon Old Age Home express dissatisfaction with limited family visits due to work or family issues, causing communication difficulties and generational conflict (Yanes-

García 2011 p.140). Research shows that older adults with family support have a better quality of life, with greater support leading to a higher quality of life (Valdez-Huirache and Álvarez - Bocanegra 2018).

Family support positively impacts elderly patients' physical, psychological, and social well-being, enabling early cognitive stimulation and ensuring they have help when they are sick (Suárez and Gross 2019). Filardo (2011) states that "the objective of gerontological intervention in social work is to know and transform the reality of the elderly" (p.213). It must also be added that Melara and Quijada (2012) externalizes that "the social worker has to provide comprehensive care that responds to the needs of the elderly" (p.23).

Social workers provide counseling, therapy, and advice to clients, addressing psychological, emotional, and social challenges. Their primary mission is to enhance human well-being and meet basic needs, particularly for vulnerable individuals. Older adults may exhibit critical tendencies, potentially affecting relationships and family harmony. Well-being research is crucial for successful aging and understanding life dynamics. The Lawton and Brody Scale and Barthel Index are used to measure independence and well-being in older adults, identifying areas for intervention and promoting life satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** The social worker's intervention for elderly care uses instruments like the Barthel Index, Lawton Scale, Brody, Mini-Mental Test, and Yesavage Geriatric Depression Scale to measure socio-emotional well-being. They also provide guidance, direction, encouragement, and organization to improve their quality of life.

Social work intervention improves citizens' quality of life by addressing socioeconomic imbalances and restoring elderly rights. Senior centers offer family, intergenerational, and lifestyle integration programs for active aging. The Ecuadorian government's 'My Best Years' proposal focuses on active and healthy aging, recognizing older people as subjects with rights and eliminating myths hindering their full development.

The social worker at Miguel Leon Old Age Home implements a methodological process of investigation, planning, implementation, and evaluation to improve the socio-emotional environment of the elderly. New virtual strategies are introduced to monitor and support the elderly, who often live with their families or live alone. This ensures their well-being and respect.

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