

INFLUENCE OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF THE AGED IN RIVERS STATE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING.

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling. The study adopted descriptive research design. three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population comprised all the Aged (60 years and above) in Rivers State. A sample of 400 Aged men and women were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The researcher developed a self-structured questionnaire titled “Influence of the Psychosocial Needs the Aged Scale” (IPNAS). The IPNAS is divided into two sections: A and B. Section A was made up of demographic data while Section B contained 40 items designed for data collection. The instrument was validated by the researcher’s supervisor and two test experts. The reliability of the instrument was established through Test Re-Test Method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the reliability coefficient obtained was ($r = 0.84$). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions. The study found that, majority of the aged are in agreement on their psychological need; no agreement among the aged on satisfying their social needs and majority of the aged persons agreed on the influences of the psychosocial needs in their lives. Based on the findings, some recommendation were made; state government with non-governmental agencies should address the needs of the aged by developing sustainable policies and programmes such as free medical care, transportation and financial allowances to enhance productive living, inclusion for the aged should be promoted and all retirement benefits be given to them on time.

Key Words: Aged, counselling, needs, social, psychological, psychosocial

Introduction

Nigeria is a country with a population of about 140.8 million people in number (NPC, 2006). Nigeria as a nation is the most populated nation in the whole of the continent of Africa and the ninth in terms of population of humans in the world (UN, 2005). Life expectancy at birth stands at 51.6 years, the population growth rate between the years 2000 to 2005 is about 2.5% with 5% of the total population aged 60 and above. As the country in Africa with the highest population, Nigeria currently has the highest number of aged or elderly people in Africa (Kinsella & Velkoff, 2001).

The result of the National Census conducted in 2006, revealed that the National Population Commission confirmed that there is an increase in the percentage and the number of those aged 60 years and above. This signifies a major change in the age structure of the Nigerian society in the coming years, the ageing population is expected to increase in numbers and life expectancy rates will gradually rise with significant psychological, social and economic implications to the individuals and the Nation at large.

The population of the aged has been on the increase all over the world. Enhancement of life conditions as well as increasing mental health services has extended and prolonged the human life span, (Altekruse & Ray, 1998). Old age is a phase through which an individual is no longer energetically involved in production and experiences loss of role and status. Also, in this period physical strength diminishes; dependency, accident risk, disability and consumption increase; body adjustment to external world and its resistance to stressors decrease; body becomes more prone to illnesses because of immune deficiency; as a result, it suffers from many degenerative and chronic diseases. Old age is also a public health issue that concerns both mental health system and socio-economic systems that requires mental and physical care, (Terakye & Guner, 1997). The way aging is perceived these days in Nigeria is different from what it was some decades ago. Africans generally are very respectful and responsible people who took care of their elderly persons irrespective of whether they were related biologically or not. This is as a result of their culture as well as the age-long

tradition which encourages participatory activity such as caregiving within the family and community, now the case is contrary (Dimpka, 2015). The world statistics indicate an unprecedented growth in the older adult population and the fastest growing segment of the population among any other groups. Importantly, understanding the factors surrounding the process of aging and older adults' mental health needs has become urgent priorities in the past decade among mental health professionals (Roberto & DiGilio, 2016). Counselling intervention with older people has been neglected due to the common misunderstanding of the period of old age. The aged, however, are potential patient population for the counsellors of the 21st century. Counselling older adults is becoming a more specialized field than before. Being cared about by others is a little known psychosocial structure that may be associated with more serious practices in daily life of older adults. Being cared about by others is a powerful experience that all people need. Being cared about in old age has an influence on other psychological structures of older people, (Dixon, 2007). Counsellors have a professional responsibility to help meet the mental health needs of the aged. To do so most efficiently, they need to continually assess, reassess, examine, and evaluate their knowledge base concerning the rising population of the aged. It is only through such periodic, reactive reviews that they can determine ways to be positive in meeting the rising mental health needs of the increasing segment of our aged population, (Myers, 1984).

All field specialists have great duties and responsibilities especially when it has to do with the aging psychology such as education of society, establishment of sufficient and appropriate social and psychological support. The aged has psychological problems such as loneliness, depression, stress, anxiety, apathy, frustration, etc; which they need assistance. Also they have social problems like being isolated, inability to meet old friends, inability to attend social activities, lack of physiological needs, safety/security needs, love/belongingness needs and actualization needs. Thus, a research is needed to find out the Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the

Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling.

Statement of Problems

Literature has shown that the neglect of the aged has turned many of them to destitute simply because of the laxity on the part of government and families. The United Nations (2005) stated that half of all older people in West Africa at present reside in Nigeria, with a rising statistics of the elderly from 6.4 million today to 25.5 million by 2050. These statistics shows that the number would rise systematically and if care is not taken, it could constitute a continental pandemic. This is why the elderly should be given better attention as it is due to the youths and children in Nigeria.

There appears to be an unfortunate clinical neglect of the aged in Nigeria, this is especially true with regard to the psychological and mental needs of the aged (Agbawuru, 2008). The psychological and emotional needs of the aged have been virtually ignored over the past century, by the year 2020, the second most disabling disease for the elderly will be depression. Also, one of the major problems specific to the aged is depression and the feeling of isolation which are also associated with social withdrawal and often with stereotyped behaviours. The absence of psychological support, presence of chronic diseases, family conflicts are factors that lead to depression among the elderly. (Eckert & Lambert, 2002).

Understanding the factors surrounding the process of aging and older adults' mental health needs has become urgent priorities in the past decade among mental health professionals (Roberto & DiGilio, 2016). Moreover, a growth in the number of the elderly has brought about increase in their psychological and social needs to the extent that they suffer a lot of mental health issues (Ajomale, 2007).

Counselling interventions with older people has been neglected due to the common misunderstanding that old age is developmentally stable (Mardoyan & Weis, 1981). Ogwumike and Aboderin (2005), posited that the concentration of older people among the „poorest of the poor“ poses a threat to their material, physical and emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, the situation is magnified by visible evidence of increasing

destitution and begging amongst older people in countries like Nigeria and Ghana. (Ogwumike & Aboderin, 2005). Many aged people need opportunities to express their reactions to the variety of psychological and social problems they face and receive. The support and counsel of competent counsellors, psychologists and clinicians to cope with them (Agbawuru, 2008). There is a statistical estimate that by the year 2030, the number of the aged who will have psychological problems that are not organically caused will be over 13 million (Sarah & Sarason, 1987).

In Nigeria, the aged have diverse problems which calls for assistance of the government, the society at large as well as the family in helping them cope with their challenges. Sadly, there is still an apparent lack of systematically planned programmes which are designed to assist the aged in coping with these problems, coupled with lack of interest among Nigerian scholars in conducting research in gerontology, this apparent lack of interest is most noticeable in the insufficient number of suitable, reliable and current literatures in this stage of human development (Agbawuru, 2008).

The need for proper understanding of the Psychosocial needs of the aged such as how to manage depression, stress anxiety, frustration, loneliness, death wish (psychological needs) and overcoming isolation, physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem and actualization needs, lack of social activities, etc (social needs) cannot, therefore, be over emphasized since adequate knowledge of a problem is pre-requisite to the solution of the problem. Also when these psychosocial needs are understood, one will then be able to offer both preventive and remedial counselling to help the aged in avoiding these problems and in adopting more realistic interventions and strategies in coping with problems which the aged cannot entirely avoid (Agbawuru, 2008). These and more are the driving force that prompted the study on the Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling.

Purpose of the Study The main purpose of this study is to investigate the Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling. Specifically, other objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the psychological needs of the aged in Rivers State.
2. To determine the social needs of the aged in Rivers State.
3. To determine the influence of the psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The research questions on the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling are as follows:

1. What is the mean rating of the psychological needs of the aged in Rivers State?
2. What is the mean rating of the social needs of the aged in Rivers State?
3. What is the mean rating of the influence of the psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State?

Methodology

The research design that was used for this study is the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design was best for this study because it helped the researcher depict the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in an accurate way. Osuala (1987) noted that survey research studies both large and small population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter-relations of sociological and psychological variables. It is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. The main idea behind using this type of research design is to better define an opinion or behaviour held by a group of people on a given subject.

Rivers State is made up of three senatorial districts; Rivers South East, Rivers West and Rivers East. It is one of the 36 states in Nigeria, situated in the South-South. Rivers State is surrounded in the East by Abia and Akwa Ibom States, West by Bayelsa and Delta States and North by Anambra. Rivers State contains mangrove swamps, tropical rainforest, and many rivers. The population of the study consisted of all the aged in Rivers State. The last official census of Rivers State was in 2006. The total number of the population of the state was 5,198,716 and those aged 60 years and above were 266,189 consisting of both male and female for the purpose of this study, of which aged persons within the ages of 60 years

and above was 5% of the total population. (Source: Wikipedia & citypopulation.com), The multi-purpose and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in choosing the sample. Multi-purpose technique involves dividing the population into strata and selecting representatives from each stratum, before applying stratified random sampling. Stratified sampling is a type of sampling which involves dividing the population into groups (or clusters). There are three senatorial districts in Rivers State, the researcher divided the state into three strata and from each stratum selected the sample as follows; Rivers South East = 140, Rivers West = 130 and Rivers East = 130. 140 elderly people were sampled from Rivers South East because it has the highest population of the aged.

The sample comprised 400 aged (220 women and 180 men) in Rivers State who were aged 60 years and above from the total population of the aged. The sample size was calculated using fluid online calculator with confidence level of 95% at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher constructed an instrument titled “Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged Scale and Adjustment Management Strategies” (IPNAS). IPNAS is divided into two sections. Section A was made up of demographic variables such as gender, age, educational qualifications and income level. Section B sought to find out the Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged. IPNAS comprised 32 items and was responded to on four point modified likert scale of: SA- Strongly Agree (4), A - Agree (3) D - Disagree (2), SD- Strongly Disagree (1)

Face and content validity of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher’s supervisor

and two test experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port-Harcourt. They scrutinized the items and made some corrections. The corrections were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument (IPNAS) was established through test- retest method. The questionnaire was administered to 30 aged people in Bayelsa State, who were outside the sample. The administration was done in two instances after a period of two weeks. The scores generated from the two administrations were used in computing the reliability coefficient employing Pearson Product moment correlation. The calculated reliability index for IPNAS was $r = 0.84$.

The researcher administered the questionnaires with the help of research assistants. The researcher and the assistants met the selected aged persons when around for pensions and verification exercises at the Local Government Headquarters and explained the purpose of the research to the respondents to ensure they cooperated and filled the questionnaires. The researcher and assistants waited and retrieved only 373 filled copies of the questionnaire, which constituted 93.3% of the initial sample. For data analysis, mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the psychological needs of the aged in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Psychological Needs of the Aged in Rivers State

S/N	Items	X	SD	RMKS
1.	Aged persons understand their feelings and physical changes.	2.96	1.35	Agreed
2.	Aged persons like the way they look now.	1.71	1.11	Disagree
3.	Aged persons feel good about themselves age.	1.67	0.95	Disagree
4.	Aged persons are valued by their community and the society.	2.55	1.32	Agree
5.	Aged persons have confidence themselves.	3.61	0.62	Agree
6.	Aged persons feel affection from people around them.	2.62	0.90	Agree
7.	Aged persons have access to medical facilities.	3.09	0.73	Agree
8.	Aged persons have someone to talk to about their feelings.	2.01	0.67	Disagree
9.	Aged persons make all their decisions.	2.38	0.69	Agree
10.	Family members make decisions for aged persons.	2.12	0.59	Agree
11.	Aged persons feel safe at home and in their environment.	2.17	0.66	Disagree
12.	Aged persons can move around easily when at home.	2.87	0.73	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.47	0.86	

Table 4. 1 indicated aged persons agreed that they understand their feelings and physical changes; feel valued by their community and the society; have confidence in themselves and feel affection from people around them. More so, they have access to medical facilities as their mean scores of 2.96, 2.55, 3.61, 2.62, 3.09, and 2.87 revealed. On the hand, aged persons indicated that they do not like the way they look now; seldom feel good

about themselves and age; do not often have someone to talk to about their feelings with mean scores less than 2.50. The grand mean of 2.47 revealed that majority of the aged persons did not agree on satisfying their psychological needs since the grand mean is below the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What are the social needs of the aged in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Needs of the Aged in Rivers State

S/N	Item	X	SD	RMKS
13.	Aged persons relate well with their friends and age group.	2.57	0.58	Agree
14.	Aged persons have regular food, clothes and housing.	2.63	0.56	Agree
15.	Aged persons have access to money, sanitation and healthcare.	2.16	0.68	Disagree
16.	Aged persons like being retired from work.	2.38	0.76	Disagree
17.	Aged persons have more time for their family and friends now than before.	2.64	0.73	Agree
18.	Aged persons participate in social activities in their community.	2.59	0.69	Agree
19.	Aged persons have social support from their community members.	2.47	0.74	Disagree
20.	Aged persons participate in activities with others their age	2.45	0.79	Disagree
21.	Aged persons receive physical and social support from their peers	2.10	0.67	Disagree
	Grand Mean	2.46	0.68	

Table 4.2 indicated that all the aged persons disagreed on the following items; aged persons have access to money, sanitation and healthcare; like being retired from work, social support from community members. Also, they seldom participate in activities with others of their age and do not receive physical and social support from their peers with mean scores less than 2.50. The average mean scores of 2.46

shows that majority of the aged persons did not agree that they satisfy their social needs as the mean of 2.46 is less than the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question 3: What are the influences of the psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influences of Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State

S/N	Items	X	SD	RMKS
22.	Aged persons feel loss of interest and meaning in life.	2.57	0.58	Agree
23.	Aged persons feel all alone and others don't come to them.	2.63	0.56	Agree
24.	Aged persons don't participate in social activities.	2.16	0.68	Disagree
25.	Aged persons feel afraid at home especially when alone.	2.68	0.76	Agree
26.	Aged persons feel worried about themselves and family most times.	2.64	0.73	Agree
27.	Aged persons feel neglected by their family members.	2.79	0.69	Agree
28.	Aged persons are not allowed to participate in social activities	2.47	0.74	Disagree
29.	Aged persons suffer from age related illness.	3.24	0.79	Agree
30.	Aged persons experience decline in their cognitive functions.	2.60	0.67	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.64	0.68	

Table 4.3 indicated that majority of the aged persons agreed that they feel sad and hopeless; feel loss of interest and meaning in life; stay alone and others do not come to them; being worried about themselves and family most

times, feel afraid at home especially when alone and felt neglected by their family members, Thus, mean scores of 2.58, 2.57, 2.63, 2.68, 2.64, 2.79 and 2.57. Contrary to these views, the aged persons disagreed to none participation

and not allowed participation in social activities, and some of them do suffer from age related illness and are experiencing decline in their cognitive functions. The grand mean of 2.64 shows a high extent agreement of the influences of psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Psychological Needs of the Aged

Research question one indicated grand mean of 2.47 revealed that majority of the aged did not agree on satisfying their psychological needs since it is below the criterion mean of 2.50. The present finding is in agreement with the finding of Machizawa and Lpersonsau (2010) on the Psychological Needs of Japanese American Elders, the result identified psychological needs to include independence, cultural connection, social connection, feeling useful, and maintaining pride and dignity. Similarly, Irungu et al. (2016) whose study revealed the need for self-worth which was influenced by feeling important to their local community and the larger society, they also felt other people have a great part to contribute on gerontology, thow happy they felt. Also, Atwal (2014) conducted a study on Psychological Needs of Rural and Urban Old Aged Women, the result of the study identified psychological needs of sympathy and affection by family members, positive attitude of youngsters towards them, peaceful atmosphere at home and Emotional support. Similarly, Animasohun and Chapman (2017) carried out a study on Psychosocial Health Challenges of the Elderly in Nigeria, the study found increased demand for health care services. Their findings are consistent with the present finding.

Social Needs of the Aged

Research question two indicated average mean scores of 2.46 which showed that majority of the aged persons did not agree that they satisfy their social needs as the grand mean of 2.46 is less than the criterion mean of 2.50. The present finding is in agreement with the finding of Bruggencate et al. (2019) who identified social needs such as connectedness, autonomy, affection, behavioural confirmation and status as important for the wellbeing of older people. Similarly, Makiwane and Kwizera (2006)

highlighted general health need; with basic needs of food, clothing and housing; emotional well-being; and their environmental harmony including access to amenities of transport, sanitation, safe water and security. Also, Lorraine and Dorfman (1989) identified the need of planning for retirement, reading about retirement, and exposure to radio or television programs about retirement. These studies are consistent with the present finding. Bruggencate et al. (2018) identified social need as feeling of connectedness to others and to a community or neighbourhood which contributed to wellbeing as well as a feeling of independence, staying active by doing volunteer work or participating in (leisure) social activities satisfied social needs. Their findings are consistent with the present finding.

Influences of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged

Research question three which indicated grand mean of 2.64 showed a high extent agreement of the effects of psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State. The present finding is in agreement with the finding of Chen (1987) who noted the effects of psychosocial factors can manifest as sleep difficulties, worry and anxiety, depression, loss of interest, and a feeling of tiredness. Similarly, Dong et al. (2012) study noted that social, psychological and physical health factors could contribute to the experience of loneliness. Also, Acierno (2009) identified other effects as financial abuse, being neglected, endured emotional abuse including the prevalence of physical and sexual abuse respectively as effects of psychosocial needs of the aged. The present study is consistent with Gupta et al. (2002) who conducted a survey on the Prevalence of Health Problems of the aged with hypertension, diabetes mellitus, respiratory disorders, pulmonary tuberculosis, asthma, cataract and symptoms of urinary tract infection. Their finding agreed with the present finding.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study on Influence of the Psychosocial Needs of the Aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling, the following conclusions were made:

1. Majority of the aged persons were in agreement with their psychological needs.

2. There was no agreement among the aged persons on satisfying their social needs.
3. Majority of the aged persons agreed on the influence of psychosocial needs in their lives.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The state government with the support of non-governmental agencies should strive to provide the psychological and social needs of the aged living among us to enhance their productive living.
 2. Family members of the aged persons should provide more emotional support and cagerontology,tre giving to them.
 3. The government should develop sustainable policies and programmes such as free medical care, free transport for the aged in addition to financial allowances. This will help them to be emotionally stable.
 4. The government should promote inclusion for all citizens and ensure that all retirement benefits are given on time especially to the aged.
 5. There should be prohibition and prosecution for every form of abuse of the aged in order to make them have sense of dignity.
 6. Both the State and Federal governments should provide free and compulsory medical treatment to the aged. This will help them live longer.
 7. The aged should be allowed to contribute fully in social inclusive activities of the government. They should be given advisory role in the government.
3. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to go for routine medical check-ups to ensure their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and avoid visiting quacks for medical treatments.
 4. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to participate in social and physical activities which in turn could help them to overcome loneliness and isolation and also help them cope with retirement life.
 5. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to accept death with dignity and happiness because it is inevitable, they can also remarry if they so desire after the death of a spouse.
 6. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to avoid unhealthy lifestyles, eat balanced diet that will improve their health and promote immunity to sicknesses and diseases.
 7. Guidance counsellors should engage in mass campaign, seminars, talk shows, etc. to create social inclusion and support for the aged.
 8. Guidance counsellors should use mass media to encourage younger persons to respect the aged and always interact with them to help them overcome loneliness.

Implications for Counselling

The following are the counselling implications of the study:

1. Counselling units should be established in all local government areas of the state to attend to the psychosocial needs of the aged in order to improve their physical and mental wellbeing.
2. Guidance counsellors and social workers should encourage family members of the aged to be empathic, patient and understanding, to avoid siring up tension that will trigger health problems.

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