

Role of Counseling for wellbeing of Senior Citizens

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Abstract

Old age is the closing period in the life span. In recent year, there is a growing concern about the problems of the senior citizens, especially those who are in their late sixties or above. It has been found that rapid growth of the old population due to better living conditions, medical advancement and favorable government policy. It is estimated that by the year 2050 the old population may reach 25% level. Age 60 is the demarcation for clients referred to as "third-age" clients. It is apparent the oldest of the old live much longer, into their 90s and beyond. It is observed that, senior citizens are neglected by the society, because they assume that senior citizens are incapable of active business of life, they cannot contribute. The family members also neglect them. Counselor can understand the psycho-social and biological problems and needs of old people help them to solve their problems and to help them to enhance wellness in their life. Counselor can create happiness in their life. Once senior citizens people are satisfied in their life they can spend their time creatively and constructively if they decide to spend his life doing well to themselves, family, society and ultimately to the nation also. Thus senior citizens people can play an active and important role in the material progress of themselves, society and nation.

Keywords: Counseling, Senior citizens, Old age

Introduction

Old age is a natural process of individual's life that begins at birth and ends at death. So old age is normal inevitable and universal phenomena. It is effect of change and it is coupled with several problem associated with the physical, mental, social and emotional health conditions of an individual. Old age is also related to various kinds of pains and other manifestations of illness. There are changes in the body and mind of old age. The physical changes are found in skin, bones and joints, head, face urinary track, heart and lungs, eyesight (Glaucoma and macular degeneration) hearing, sexual changes and body comfort. The mental changes are found like intelligence, memory, adaptability, depression, and senility. Due to these changes the elderly are finding themselves vulnerable. Old age is the closing period in the life span. In recent year, there is a growing concern about the problems of the senior citizens, especially those who are in their late sixties or above. Gerontology is a science of the study of the old people, concerning their cognitive, physical and social lives. Age sixty is usually considered the dividing line between middle and old age. Regarding the age of old people there is variation that occurs in nation to nations and even culture to culture also. But in India people during the sixty are usually referred to as "old age". It has been found that rapid growth of the old population due to better living conditions, medical advancement and favorable government policy. It is estimated that by the year 2050 the old population may reach 25% level. Age 60 is the demarcation for clients referred to as "third-age" clients. It is apparent the oldest of the old live much longer, into their 90s and beyond. Older adults are an ever-increasing proportion of our population.

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active business of life, they cannot contribute. The family members also neglect them. The children are grown up and take active interest in their families and careers of their own. In short, senior citizens face the prospect of a dull unexciting, uneventful life in his own house as well as in society.

Actually senior citizens are most valuable section of the society because they have a lifetime of practical wisdom and experience waiting to be tapped for a worthy cause. They are storehouse of knowledge which he can and should share with members of the community. The third stage of life can be most fulfilling and productive period in a person's life. They are free from all their responsibilities so they can spend their time creatively and constructively. Thus the old age people can play an active and vital role in progress of themselves and community too. For the wellbeing of old age people they need counseling.

What is old age?

Old age is (Ageing) defined as a state of mind, that does not always keep pace with our chronological age. And how one can face the normal changes, challenges and opportunities of one's life.

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- (a) India-60 and Above; (b) America-65; (c) Sweden-67

Types of old age (ageing)

There are four types of old age as listed below

1. Primary Ageing

Primary ageing is natural changing and result of disease. It refers to change in human capacity due to changes in cell and tissue, causing deterioration of biological system and its subsystems and susceptibility to disease and mortality. In this stage our body follow and the gradual and inevitable process of body deterioration that takes place throughout life.

2. Physiological ageing

Physiological ageing is the continuous growth and change in cognition and personality. This change in cognition affects person's ability to process the information and their susceptibility to persuasion.

3. Social ageing

It refers to changes in social relationships that define social status within a society, power relationship within social groups and various roles people are expected to play at various stage of life.

4. Secondary ageing

It results from negative environmental influences, poor diet and disease, lack of physical activity, poor nutrition, environmental pollution, stress and unhealthy activities like smoking and drinking, and exposure to hazardous materials.

Definition of counselling

Counselling is an interactive process conjoining the counselee who needs assistance and the counselor who is trained educated to give this association (perz, 1965).

Counselling as a process in which the counselor assists the counselee to make interpretation of facts relating to a choice, plan, or adjustment which he needs to make. Smith (1995)

According to John McIyod (2007) Counselling is an activity that takes place when someone who is troubled invites and follows another person to enter a particular kind of relationship with them.

Areas of counselling

There are various types of counselling such as personal counselling, interpersonal counselling, family counselling, educational counselling, carrier counselling, marriage counselling, counselling for women, counselling for weaker section, counselling for drug addicted etc.

Old age counselling is one of the important types of counselling.

The objectives of senior citizens counselling

1. To understand the psycho-social and biological problems of old people.
2. To help them to solve their problems.
3. To enhance wellness in their life.

Characteristics of senior citizens as clients

1. Willingness to seek counseling

At present it has been sated that many older adults are a special case of the reluctant client. The attitude of aged is 'I can do it myself' and that going to counseling is a sign of weakness. They are also reluctant to discuss sexuality, finances, and personal inadequacies. They assure themselves and others that everything is fine. If they have some problems they define them in medical rather than psychological term.

2. Physiological changes that affect counseling

Physiological change is possible in sensory, physical and mental losses that are related to the age. Of particular importance are changes in hearing, vision, and memory. They experiences some decline in the speed with which process information or divide attention between multiple simultaneous tasks by demonstrate change in short term memory but long term memory my show some changes.

3. Variability of individuals within the life-stage

Old age people are from diverse background, there are difference between 62 years old person for their living style and their way activity. Some are too much active while some are not active, they also unable to do their own work. According to Warnick (1995) because of the inequalities of life, how a person enters the third age varies tremendously.

With the concise formula:-

$$\text{Vulnerable Third Age} = \text{Difficult Childhood} + \text{Dysfunctional Adulthood}$$

4. Change potential

The theory of Erik Erikson (1963) describe eight stages of life, with tasks that must be at least partly accomplished at each stage for the person function effectively the next stage. A people who accomplish all these stages successfully can then move on to older adulthood, with the sense of ego integrity. 'Older age is a reflection of young age' and it leads to change potential.

Experiences and counseling agendas of senior citizens

Normative events

Across the period of 30 years or so (60-90+) that we refer to as older adulthood or the third age, there is a fairly predictable set of experience that all of us encounter. These experiences come as the inevitable and irreversible consequences of biological and psychological aging. The summary of review of the current literature on the counseling issues of older adults, produced the same list is similar to the list of Robert Hsvighurst (1972).

The list is as follows

- a. Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health.
- b. Adjustment to retirement and reduced income.
- c. Adjusting to the death of a life partner or spouse.
- d. Establishing an explicit association with one's age group.
- e. Adopting and adapting societal roles in a flexible way
- f. Establishing satisfactory practical living arrangement.

Counselling agendas for senior citizens

1. Decision making of adjustment problems of their transition events.
2. Older need to build satisfying new identities as older person and they need help in understanding and accepting the value and reality of their life.
3. Issues of anxiety and stress, related to the losses of their life, particularly the sense of losing control over one's life.
4. Depression and demoralization
5. Abuse nature may be pattern of midlife or the effect of the pressure of old age.

It has been observed that a counselor working with old age clients faces different issues than counselors of younger persons. Although issues of problem solving meaning and identity and the affective disorders are not unique to older adults, these issues include new fabric that is particular to the experiences of third age adults.

For effective counselling of aged, counselor must know about their attitudes toward third agars. Sherman (1981) emphasized that counseling must be optimistic the innate capacity of older persons to overcome the demoralization that comes from these losses and traumas of aging without denying the inevitability. Many older adults are initially reluctant to participate in counseling, it is especially important for the counselor to offer them a genuine welcome to the counseling process to show respect towards them. It has been found that older client tend to be co-operative and to work hard on their issues if they get satisfaction. So this is the skill and challenge of counselor to work with third generation.

There are same special emphasis and techniques of counseling for third age clients.

1. Challenging self - Defeating myths.
2. Clarifying identify and Enhancing self- esteem.
3. Reframing Unnecessary and negative Thoughts.
4. Substance abuse.
5. Grief work.

According to Warnick (1995) there are several tasks old age people (client) must complete in order to deal with grief.

- Accept the reality of loss
- Experience the pain and grief
- Adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing
- Withdraw emotional energy from the older relationship and reinvest it in another relationship or other activities.

Many old people go through a normal sorrowful process without counseling. Warnick (1955) lists several thoughts that may encourage the client to face and adjust to the loss.

- Grief is the price we pay for loving.
- To bury grief, take little steps forward.
- The laws of nature do not protect good people.
- vulnerability to death is one of life`s condition.
- After living through the death of a loved one we fear the future less

Counselling for senior citizens

- ❖ Be active and participate in varies activities.
- ❖ Accept reality.
- ❖ Be optimistic.
- ❖ Accept changing social norms.
- ❖ Spend leisure time properly.
- ❖ Proper thinking of Past, present and future events.
- ❖ Take care of health (physical, mental, social and Spiritual).
- ❖ Do proper physical exercise and yoga.
- ❖ Keep busy yourself with work (productive, un-productive).
- ❖ Help others.
- ❖ Keep busy yourself in domicile work.
- ❖ Spend your time in social and spiritual activities.
- ❖ Spend your time with relatives.

- ❖ Join with varies group.
- ❖ Seek challenges (Accept new challenges)

Senior citizens are an ever-increasing presence in our society due to increase in human longevity. Counsellors are encouraged to maintain positive collaborations with families of older client when these families are creating role. Counselor can understand the psycho-social and biological problems and needs of old people help them to solve their problems and to help them to enhance wellness in their life. Counselor can create happiness in their life. Once senior citizens people are satisfied in their life they can spend their time creatively and constructively if they decide to spend his life doing well to themselves, family, society and ultimately to the nation also. Thus senior citizens people can play an active and important role in the material progress of themselves, society and nation. They can function with self-respect. Counselor emphasizes growth as well as remediation. Aged counseling is difficult to apply with an exact approach but taking curable ways will be more effective. This is the role conceived for senior citizens by counselor.

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