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**Special
Edition**

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN EDUCATION

SPECIAL EDITION IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR ADEYEMI IBUKUNOLUWA IDOWU

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June 2020

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the aged need help from the family members, government and the general public.

Concept of Ageing

This chapter discusses concept of ageing, biological pathways and ageing, concept of disability, problematic situations in ageing, theories of ageing and managing the aged through counselling.

Ageing is a blessing and not a curse. It is a natural phenomenon common to any creature. Some organisms grow into old age before death while some are not opportuned to grow into old age. Ageing is progressive, gradual, and continuous until death. Ageing is defined in various ways by different researchers and authors. It is defined as the representation of accumulation of changes in human organisms over time which is accompanied by physical, emotional, psychological cognitive and social changes (Porchia, 20120). Hendricks and Hendrick (1981) in Hassan (2012) described ageing as a combination of varied event that impinge universally on peoples' lives occurring at cellular, physiological and social levels. Ageing is the process of growing old, resulting in reduction in strength, sexual activity among others (Dimkpa, 2015). Porchia (2012) stated that the elderly are people who are 60 years and above.

Ageing depicts the picture of a man as a temporary being on earth. Man is not made to live forever on earth hence ageing brings deterioration in human form which culminates into inability to perform actively as before. Ageing can be said to be a drop in physical growth and development in human organism which is gradual and continuous. It is not reversible. Although life extensionists may try to delay the ageing process by cosmetic makeups, but the truth remains that ageing is taking place. A hundred year old man cannot look like a thirty year old man in physical, social, physiological and in other aspect. Ageing is a phenomenon that cannot be reversed. No human being can choose to remain young therefore ageing is inevitable as far as there is life.

Biological pathways and ageing

Biological pathways are processes of interactions in molecules of cells that results into certain changes in cells. MD Anderson cancer Center (2020) defined biological pathways as series of interactions among molecules molecules in a cell that leads to a certain products or change in a cell. These biological pathways according to MD Anderson Center can trigger the assembling of new molecule.

such as fat or protein and can also turn on and off or spurs a cell to move. These biological pathways are known as 'ageotypes according

to scientists which influence the way people age (Tracy, 2020). Tracy stated that scientists have so far discovered four types of biological pathways which are:

- i. metabolic pathway
- ii. liver pathway
- iii. immune pathway and
- iv. kidney pathway

Metabolic Pathway

Metabolism is defined as the process in chemical reactions that enables the cells to divide, keep living, growing and declining. Metabolic pathway is a linked series of chemical reactions going on in a cell which results to the production of reactants, products and intermediates called metabolites which can be modified by sequence of chemical reactions catalyzed by enzymes (). Through the process of chemical reaction the metabolic pathways in humans which are glycolysis and glucose oxidation are obtained. People who are having problems in the metabolic pathway maybe more prone to develop type 2 diabetes as they are ageing.

Liver Pathway

Liver pathway is the detoxification pathway which is the first line of defense against toxins (Grant, 1991). Grant further stated that this pathway contains group of enzymes known as cytochrome p450 family which help to neutralize substances such as alcohol and caffeine. These enzymes protect the body by converting toxins into a less harmful ones. When there is problem in the liver pathway, the person may likely develop liver problem as ageing process is progressing.

Immune Pathway

This the pathway through which protection for specific pathogens can be achieved. Chaplin, (2010) stated that immune pathways provide long term protection against specific pathogens. When there is problem with the pathway, during old age the person might be susceptible to inflammation and immune system disorder.

Kidney Pathway

This the pathway by which blood exists the kidney through the renal vein (National kidney Foundation,2019). Particles and fluid removed from the blood and the filtrates move from Bowman's capsule to the proximal tubule, loops of Henle, distal tubule and collecting tubule. People who have problem with kidney pathway stand the risk of developing kidney disease during the process of aging.

Ageing therefore, is a life-long process because individuals begin their ageing process at the moment of birth and go through the life course accumulating a range of experiences that may positively or negatively affect their capacities and well-being in later years (Iroegbu, 2007).Ageing has a field of study called gerontology. The word 'gerontology' was coined from Greek word 'geron' which means old man and logia 'study of' by Ilyallyich Mechnikov in 1903. Gerontology is the scientific study of old age, the process of ageing and the accompanying problems of old age. It is the study of the physical, psychological, and societal changes that occur as people age (Hoff, 2007). A gerontologist is the person who studies gerontology. Gerontology investigates the physical and mental challenges of ageing individuals. The field also examines societal shifts as older people continue to comprise more of the population so as to address the challenges of the ageing population to bolster their quality of life. Career paths in gerontology include research, social work, health care management, nursing, occupational therapy, administration education. Gerontologist include researchers and practitioner in the field of medicine, nursing, chemistry, social work, criminology, biology and sociology.

Concept of disability

Disability can be defined as inability to function in a measurable capacity which is as a result of loss due to impairment. Akinpelu (2016) defined disability as a measurable functional loss resulting from impairment. Disability is any restriction or lack of ability which is due to impairment resulting into ability to perform an activity in a manner that expected in a human being.

Oldage and Disability

It is not out of place to discuss issues on disability when ageing is in focus. The fact remains that ageing is accompanied by some disabilities and abilities decline during old age (National Institute of Health, 1989). In old age the body is no longer functioning effectively due to changes in the body. Areas in which there are body changes

during ageing/old age as reported by (Hassan,2012) include the following:

The Skin: The skin tends to be wrinkled, rough, mottled, more easily broken and slower to heal. There is decrease in muscular strength and coordination which result to inability to perform physical tasks easily. Due to decrease in muscular strength and body coordination the aged cannot maintain body posture, those who are tall tend to become shorter. Senses of the body are not left out of this deterioration during old age. The five senses in the body which are sense of sight smell, feeling, touching and hearing are badly affected. It is a common thing to hear such statement from the aged as "I can't hear," I have lost my taste, I didn't hear the smell etc. The senses and reflexes are generally dull during old age (Scffiman,1997).

Organs of the body: At old age the organs are no longer very active. Digestive organs become very slow in function which causes poor digestion/indigestion, reproductive organs are no more active as usual, there is decline in kidney filtration. Generally there is decline in all organs and systems in the body. It is worthy of note that there are peculiarities in the humans when it comes to ageing. Some people age fast while some age slowly. People age at different rates. Diet and life style can constitute whether one would age fast or not. There are individual differences in ageing.

The Psyche: Psyche is the human soul, mind or spirit. This is the psychological aspect of human makeup. The psyche is the central force in thought, emotion and behaviour. In old age, there is a progressive and gradual decline in the ability of the aged to think, express emotions and to respond to issues pertaining to life. Memory loss is one of the aspects that the aged are faced which leads to gradual decline in the ability to calculate, think abstractly, imagine, speak fluently or orient oneself in times and space (Hassan, 2012). The deterioration in the psyche affects the personality of the aged.

At this stage of life, people think that the aged cannot perform certain activities that have to do with the mind. This affects the self-concept and the status of the aged.

It is in error for people to think that the aged is incapacitated in thought, because some people at old age reasons very well and are articulated, there is no remarkable loss in their thought and intellectual reasoning.

Problematic Situations in Old Age:

Ageing and old age have their own attendant problems. Other stages of life like childhood, adolescent stage and adulthood have their own problems and stress, old age problem seems to be more because of its peculiar nature of deterioration. These problems are health problems, loneliness, stigmatization, and poverty.

Health Problems: Ageing brings deterioration in the body and in parts that make the body function effectively. Such parts like organs and tissues power almost every activity in human life. These organs are respiration organ, excretory organ, digestive organs etc. In old age these organ and tissues, become weak and inactive making the body susceptible to diseases and sicknesses. Christmas and Anderson (2000) recommended exercise guideline for the ageing/aged to help them keep fit. Also Hassan (2016) stated that as one is ageing the lung's capacity diminishes, temperature control and kidney filtration decline. Diseases such as respiratory track infections, high blood pressure, diabetes, parkinson's disease, arthritis, heart disease, among others are common in the old age.

Loneliness: Loneliness is the condition of staying without anybody. It is a state of being alone, a state of solitude. Loneliness can result from retirement from work, children leaving the house to fend for themselves, daughters getting married and leaving the house and leaving the aged parents. The condition of staying lonely can lead to depression to the aged.

Neglect: Nobody wants to be aged, some people tend to have negative attitude and neglect towards the aged (Hassan 2016). Thought of old age is scaring to the young ones. Aged people are faced with abuse of their rights and privileges, such abuses are abandonment, isolation, physical assault, neglect, abduction etc (Hamp, 2001).

Poverty: As people age, skills drop, hence the person may be unable to carry out some activities which he/she used to do before. For those who are workers, they will be relieved of their job (statutory retirement). Following the event of retirement, salaries are no longer paid. Hence for the aged retirees who did not prepare well for retirement old age becomes a period of poverty. Akinade (2005) noted that retirement often translates into no jobs, lack of source of gainful income, no money, plenty of financial troubles, poverty and misery. The aged who are in this category may lose their self-worth and self-esteem in the society. Akinade (2006) also stated that penury and hardship can subject them to unhidden degradation and ego killing, humiliation and experience of

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psychological disengagement in life which might lead to variety of discomforts of declining physiological and psychological problems. Low self-esteem and self-concept leads to the feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, helplessness, inferiority and a sense of being unable to improve one's situation (Oyewole, 2010). The uneducated aged people are more likely to face more financial and social problems during, probably because they are not receiving pensions and probably did not prepare well for old age.

Theories of Ageing

There are several theories of ageing which are categorized into biological, psycho-social and developmental theories.

Biological Theories: Modern theories of ageing, are grouped into two main categories; programmed and damaged or error theories (Klin, 2010).

According to (Klin, 2010) programmed theories state that aging follows a biological time table from childhood and the development continues and the regulation of this depends on the changes in gene expression that affects the systems that are responsible for the maintenance, repair and defense response. Programmed theories of aging is based on the fact that growth process follows a definite pattern from childhood, into adulthood and as these stages unfold the gene expression are affected leading to decrease in body maintenance, repair and defense responses. Klin (2010) stated that programmed theories have three subcategories, (i) Programmed longevity which attributes aging to as a sequential switching on and off of certain genes leading to senescence. (ii) *Endocrinetheory:* According to Klin (2010) in endocrine theory, there is a biological clock which acts on hormones thereby controlling the pace of aging. (iii) *Immunologicaltheory:* Also Klin (2010) states in immunological theory that immune system declines overtime which leads to increased vulnerability to infectious disease, ageing and death.

Damage or error theories: This theory was explained by (Klin 2010). It is a theory that is laying emphasis on environmental assault to living organisms which results to cumulative damage at various levels as the cause of aging. Damage or error theories are in these subcategories, wear and tear theory, Rate of living theory, Cross-linking theory, free radical theory and somatic DNA damage theory.

Wear and tear theory: The first person that proposed this theory was August Weismann in 1882. The theory proposed that ageing result because of wear and tear of cells and tissues due to repeated use over

time. Parts of the body wear out due to repeated use of cells and tissues which kill them and then the body.

Rate of Living theory: the theory holds that as far as the organism uses oxygen in the same way the organism is short lived. The theory was proposed by Rallo.

Cross - Linking theory: Johan Bjorksten was the person who proposed this theory in 1942. The theory proposed that it is the accumulation of cross-linked proteins that damage the cells and tissues in the body which results in the slowing down of body processes which result into aging.

Freeradical theory: The theory was first proposed by Gerschman in 1954 but was developed by Denham Harman MD in 1959. The theory attributed aging to damage caused by superoxides and other free radicals like macro molecular components of the cell which gives rise to accumulated damage causing organs and cells to stop functioning. Such macromolecules include nucleic acid, sugar, protein and lipids. This theory is criticised by Igor Afanasev who discovered reactive oxygen species (ROS) signaling as the most important enzyme/gene pathway that causes development of gene senescence and organismal ageing.

Somatic DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) Theory: This theory holds that it is the damage to DNA which occurs continuously that damages cells in living organism. Some of these damages can be repaired while some cannot. Also genetic mutations occur and accumulate as age increases, which cause cells to deteriorate and malfunction.

Psychosocial Theories of Ageing: Psychosocial theories of aging was proposed by Burbank PM in 1986. Subcategories of psychosocial theories are continuity theory, disengagement theory and activity theory.

Continuity Theory of Aging: The theory states that older adults will always maintain the same activities and their behaviours will be the same as their relationship will still be same as what the relationship was in their earlie years of life.

Disengagement Theory of Aging: The theory holds that aging is inevitable. It is a mutual withdrawal or a disengagement which reduces the interaction between the aging person and social system which leads to withdrawal from the society.

Activity Theory of Aging: This theory can also be known as implicit theory of aging, normal theory of aging or lay theory of aging. The theory proposed that aging is successful when older people are active and still maintain their social interaction.

Developmental Theory of Aging: Developmental theory of aging proposes that there is a positive correlation between developmental time and adult longevity. This theory according to (Richard, 2011) focuses on causal and mechanistic links between development and senescence. Richard proposes in the theory that the primary cause of senescence is developmental inertia and the decay of the internal order and integrated function among interdependent systems of the body by which aging progresses overtime. The process creates an avenue through which many recognized age associated physiologic and metabolic sequences arise as consequences of senescence rather than the cause of it. (Richard, 2011).

Managing the Aged through Counselling

Counselling for the aged and those who are ageing is crucial. It is not good for them to be ignorant of the demands of ageing. Normative ageing is a blessing from God. The problem lies on the way people perceive old age. The geriatric counsellors should play proactive roles in ensuring that people age successfully. Counselling has to start with basic knowledge of the ageing process which has to be explained to the ageing/aged people. The geriatric counsellor should differentiate between normal aging and pathological ageing, facts versus fiction and stereotypes in ageing.

The areas of focus during counselling should be mainly on nutrition, exercise, health, and social support. Other areas of focus during counselling are: grief and loss, dementia, depression, mobility, independence, death and dying and mental health changes. Some of these are discussed below.

Counselling on nutrition

Bortz and Bortz (1996) stated that nutritional needs change as a person grows older and nutritional deficiencies can lead to serious health problems. Deficiency in vitamins can result in cognitive deficiencies

(Bortz and Bortz, 1996). They further stated that deficiency in vitamins may lead to early dementing process.

The aged and the ageing are to eat more vegetables and fruits and avoid fatty foods. Eating more vegetables can prevent health problem such as diabetes and heart disease (Richardson, 2010). Lung cancer

and high blood pressure can be prevented by not smoking. Other things that need to be avoided are consumption of sugar, caffeine, fried food, and excessive alcohol.

Medicare: It is of immense benefit for the aged to have regular medical check-up. During medical check-up health screening for diseases like diabetes and vitamin B12 deficiency is necessary.

Blood pressure should be checked regularly, PSA levels should be checked to avoid prostate problems in men and mammogram in females to check cancerous growth in the breast. Cardiovascular screening is necessary to check the health status of the heart regularly.

Exercise: The importance of exercise cannot be over emphasized. Aerobic exercise helps the aged. Richardson (2010) noted that many health problems of old age can be reversed by exercise. Exercise in old age could be taking a brisk walk and trekking usually in the mornings or late in the evening. Hassan (2016) suggested that counsellors should work with the clients to identify and challenge some of the obstacles to exercising which their clients may be experiencing.

Social Support: Counsellors can help to promote social activities for the aged. Social support can ease loneliness and depression. Old age can be the period of loneliness. Social activities can fill the vacuum created by loneliness. Counsellors should encourage the aged to attend religious and community activities, such activities provide the avenue for the aged to talk and relate with people, being part of a group is essential to remain in good spirit and ease stress and depression (Richardson, 2010). Some religious groups and communities have activities such as drama group, Societies, clubs, etc. The aged should be encouraged to join these activities for healthy living. Regular visitation by members of these groups can ease stress and depression during old age. In the time of need these groups may provide help to aged. Empathy, respect and support should characterise the counsellors' approach during counselling.

Conclusion. This chapter examined the concept of ageing/old age, biological pathways which are discussed based on the various aspects of the pathways. Concept of disability with respect to old age and ageing disability and how the aged could be managed were discussed. Ageing as a concept is defined as a combination of varied events that impinge universally on people's lives occurring at cellular, physiological and social levels. While human beings are ageing there are attendant problems that accompany the process. These problems were discussed under problematic situations in old age. These problems bother on health issues, loneliness, poverty, among others. Theories of ageing

were explored in the body of the work. Attempt was made to explain the various subcategories of the theories. Managing the aged through counselling was explored. The problems of the aged could be ameliorated if the geriatric counsellors play their roles of counselling to the ageing/aged. The geriatric counsellors should ensure that people pass through this stage of life with relative ease.

Revision questions

1. a. Briefly explain the concept of ageing.
b. Give reasons why people are afraid of old age
2. Explain the categories of damaged or error theories according to biological theory.
3. As Geriatric counsellor, explain the strategies you will employ to help a 60 year old person to age successfully.

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