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COUNSELING EDUCATION AS STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING FAMILY HEALTHCARE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

WILLIAMS-OLADAPO OMOLARA OMOLOLA Ph.D.

Lagos State University of Education, Noforija, Epe, Lagos State
Email: williams-oladapooo@lasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Apart from medical treatment and facilities, the individuals need to be provided with health care counseling. It was shown that, counseling education focuses upon in imparting information in terms of ways of promoting good health and well-being of an individual and the family at large. Furthermore, it focuses on ways to prevent the occurrence of family health problems, illnesses and promoting healthy lifestyles. Counseling education for family healthcare takes place simultaneously with medical treatment. When medical practitioners and health care specialists are providing treatment to health problems and illnesses, they need to provide counseling as well. Counseling in terms of health care is considered important in the case of physical as well as psychological health. The important measures to promote health care counseling are, conducting analysis of areas, augmenting one's knowledge, improving communication skills, implementing listening skills, implementing anti-discrimination policies, concentrating on facts, focusing on personality traits of counselees, focusing on reflection, practicing rephrasing and summarising and writing. The areas requiring the implementation of health care counseling are in terms of promoting good health, preventing diseases and health problems, curbing psychological problems, promoting healthy mind-sets and promoting healthy lifestyles. Finally, it can be stated that, counseling education contributes significantly in making provision of knowledge and understanding to the individuals in promoting good health and well-being. There is need to be ensured that counseling is suitable to the individuals. The medical practitioners, health care specialists and professional counselors need to make use of innovative methods in counseling sessions.

Keywords: Counselling, Promoting, Family, Healthcare, Strategy

Introduction

There is a growing body of research that has been exploring the influence of education on health. Even in highly developed countries like the United States, it has been observed that adults with lower educational attainment suffer from poor health when compared to other populations. In medical and health care centres, the medical practitioners and health care specialists make provision of support and medical treatment to the individuals, particularly the ones who suffer from health problems and illnesses. Apart from medical treatment and facilities, the individuals need to be provided with health care counselling. Counseling education is critical elements in the provision of quality family wellbeing. Through counseling, providers help family make and carry out their own choices about healthcare issues. Good counseling leads to improve client satisfaction. A satisfied client promotes family planning, returns when she needs to and continues to use a chosen method.

Family healthcare promotion can be defined as 'the process by which families work to improve or maintain the physical well-being of the family unit and its members' (Craft-Rosenberg & Pehler, 2011). The 'family-level' processes involve patterns of behaviour within the family with underlying mechanisms, e.g. family beliefs and support for healthy lifestyles, demonstrating familiar interdependencies and how family members may influence each other in health behaviour (Skelton et al., 2012). Family healthcare promotion has been examined in various fields (e.g. medicine, sociology, psychology, family therapy, family nursing), giving rise to a heterogeneity of literature that involve terminology, theoretical frameworks, roles of family members involved and health behaviour examined. From the family system's perspective of how complex familiar interactions shape the individual (Bowen, 2016), theoretical adaptations for family healthcare behaviour influence have been wide-ranging and contextualized for segments with different health priorities, including the diverse roles of counseling in influencing family healthcare delivery in the

diverse Nigeria society. This paper intended to examined counselling and language education as tools for promoting family healthcare in a diverse society in Nigeria.

Counseling

Okeke (2013) defines counseling as a helping relationship involving the counsellor and the client, in which the counsellor uses his professional knowledge and skills to assist the client attain proper development and maturity, improved functioning and ability to cope with life's problems. Counselling is also defined according to Eze (2012), as an inter-personal relationship between a professionally trained individual (counsellor) and a troubled individual (counselee) or individuals (counselees) whereby the former utilises his professional skills to help the latter to be able to solve his educational, vocational and person social problems. Bark (2013), states that guidance and counseling are the assistance made available by qualified and trained persons to an individual of any age to help him to manage his own life activities, develop his own points of view, make his own decisions and carry his own burden. Counseling education mainly refers to providing assistance and guidance to students in making the right choices in their studies, be it their educational plans, career aspirations, choice of stream and specialisation as well as the selection of college or university as per their interests and preferences.

Concept of Counselling Education

Counseling education refers to the systematic and structured process of imparting knowledge, skills, and competencies to individuals pursuing careers in the counseling profession. It is an academic and practical training approach that prepares future counselors to provide psychological,

emotional, and social support to individuals, couples, families, or groups who seek assistance in addressing personal, interpersonal, and life challenges (James & Akpan, 2017).

supervised experiences to equip students with the necessary tools to become effective and ethical counselors. The curriculum often includes courses on counseling theories, human development, ethical standards, assessment and diagnosis, counseling techniques, multicultural competence, and professional ethics (Adesina& Abiodun, 2019s). Through counseling education, students learn how to establish therapeutic relationships, employ evidence-based interventions, and facilitate the personal growth and well-being of their clients. The goal of counseling education is to produce competent, empathetic, and culturally aware counselors who can work effectively with diverse populations and address a wide range of psychological, emotional, and social issues faced by clients.

Impact of Counseling Education on Family dynamics and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Counseling education, with its focus on understanding human behavior, interpersonal relationships, and mental health, plays a significant role in promoting positive family dynamics and contributing to sustainable family development. The integration of counseling principles into family interventions and support services has shown promising outcomes in enhancing communication, resolving conflicts, strengthening relationships, and nurturing the overall well-being of family members. Here are the impacts of counseling education on family dynamics and its implications for sustainable family development:

- **Enhancing Communication and Emotional Expression:** Counseling education equips professionals with effective communication techniques, active listening skills, and

empathy, which are instrumental in facilitating open and constructive family communication (Gottman & Notarius, 2000). When family members learn to express their emotions and needs more openly, it fosters understanding and empathy among family members, thereby promoting healthier and more supportive family dynamics.

- **Conflict Resolution and Problem-Solving Skills:** Counselors are trained to help individuals and families navigate conflicts and challenges more effectively. By teaching conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, counseling education empowers family members to address issues constructively, leading to more harmonious relationships and reduced tension within the family (Dattilio & Padesky, 1990).
- **Strengthening Parenting and Family Roles:** Counseling education provides insights into effective parenting strategies and family roles, promoting a positive family structure and a nurturing environment for children (Anderson & Sabatelli, 2010). By empowering parents with knowledge and skills, counseling interventions contribute to positive parent-child relationships, fostering the holistic development of children.
- **Coping with Stress and Change:** Families often encounter stressful situations and life transitions. Counseling education equips individuals with coping mechanisms to navigate these challenges effectively (McCubbin & Patterson, 2013). By teaching adaptive coping strategies, counseling interventions can help families become more resilient and better equipped to handle life's uncertainties.
- **Facilitating Family Empowerment and Agency:** Through counseling education, families can gain a sense of empowerment and agency in shaping their futures. Counseling interventions often involve collaborative goal-setting and decision-making, enabling

families to take charge of their development and sustainable well-being (De Haan, Boon, & De Jong, 2018).

- **Promoting Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being:** Counseling education emphasizes the importance of mental health and emotional well-being within families. By addressing mental health concerns and providing support during challenging times, counseling interventions contribute to the overall emotional wellness of family members (Katz & Gottman, 1996).
- **Preventing and Addressing Family Dysfunction:** Counseling education enables professionals to identify early signs of family dysfunction and provide timely interventions. By addressing underlying issues and promoting healthy coping mechanisms, counseling can prevent potential family crises and foster family stability (Walsh, 2011).

Family healthcare

Family is a group consisting of parents and children living together in a household and they are also depended on each other for living a good and healthy life. Health and well-being are the result of synergistic interactions among a variety of determinants. Family structure and composition are social determinants that may also affect health behaviours and outcomes (Danielson, Hamel-Bisselland & Winstead-Fry, 2013). Health problems are supposed to be the major concern of a family as older people are more prone to suffer from ill health than younger age group. So, family plays an important role to care the elderly population.

Family health is a state in which the family is a resource for the day-to-day living and health of its members. A family provides its individual members with key resources for healthful living, including food, clothing, shelter, a sense of self-worth, and access to medical care. Further,

family health is a socioeconomic process whereby the health of family member is mentioned. Family health care provided to a child or non-minor dependent by a Resource Family in accordance with the written instructions of the health professional for the child or non-minor dependent (Gubrium, 2014).

Areas Requiring the Implementation of Counseling Education for Family Healthcare

The areas requiring the implementation of counseling education for family healthcare are in terms of promoting good health, preventing diseases and health problems, curbing psychological problems, promoting healthy mind-sets and promoting healthy lifestyles according to Nair, Leena and Ajithkumar,(2016) as follows:

Promoting Good Health

In promoting good health, there are number of factors in terms of which individuals are required to augment their awareness. When the individual experience health problems physically and psychologically and seek counselling and guidance facilities from counselors, they make provision of treatment. Apart from treatment, they also make provision of knowledge to them in terms of various factors, which are necessary in promoting good health. These include, getting regular sleep, eating regular and well-balanced meals, getting engaged in regular physical activities, maintaining a healthy body weight, avoiding the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, developing a healthy routine, getting medical check-ups on regular basis, maintaining cleanliness, be active and implement all the factors of maintaining good health on regular basis. From the stage of early childhood throughout the lives of the individuals, it is indispensable for the individuals to generate awareness and implement these factors on regular basis. In the stage of early childhood,

parents are responsible to maintain good health of their children, but when they grow up, they are responsible to promote good health on their own. Therefore, it can be stated that, health care counselling is focused upon in imparting information in terms of promoting good health.

Preventing Diseases and Health Problems

The individual experience various types of diseases and health problems. It is apparent that individual put into practice the methods to prevent diseases and health problems. One of the common ways is to obtain medical treatment. When the diseases and health problems are severe and are affecting individuals, they need to take medical and health care treatment from medical doctors and health care experts. On the other hand, there are individuals, primarily belonging to rural and tribal communities, who make use of traditional methods in treating their health problems and diseases. Preventing diseases and health problems is regarded as one of the indispensable areas, in terms of which health care counselling is provided. Some of the important factors, which are essential in preventing diseases and health problems are, exercising and getting engaged in physical activities on regular basis, following a healthy eating plan, eating high fibre foods, obtaining adequate nutrition, paying attention towards environmental conditions, monitoring body weight on a regular basis, developing consistency, developing healthy behaviours, staying active and setting regular sleeping hours (Preventing Illness and Disease). Therefore, when the individuals will put into operation these factors on regular basis, they will be able to prevent diseases and health problems.

Curbing Psychological Problems

The psychological problems are regarded as an integral part of the lives of the individuals. When they are in a minor or moderate form, they do not have an effect upon the mind-sets and physical health of the individuals to a major extent. On the other hand, when they are in a major form, they have an effect upon the physical and psychological health conditions of the individuals. Hence, the individuals need to augment their knowledge and understanding in terms of curbing psychological problems. In some cases, the individuals possess the ability to curb psychological problems on their own, whereas, in some cases, they need to obtain counselling. Professional counsellors make provision of ideas and information to the counselees in terms of which would be effective and useful in curbing the psychological problems. For instance, when the individuals feel stressed in the implementation of a certain task, in such cases, they need to ensure they generate awareness in terms of all methods and approaches, which would lead to generation of desired outcomes. Hence, when the tasks will be performed well, the individual will be able to alleviate stress. Therefore, in the case of health care counselling, information is provided to the counselees in terms of ways of curbing psychological problems.

Promoting Healthy Mind-sets

To promote healthy mind-sets, the individuals need to put emphasis upon their overall well-being. To lead to overall well-being, the individuals need to get engaged in tasks and activities, which would prove to be beneficial to them in enriching their lives and achievement of goals. Hence, the individuals need to ensure that they put into operation the measures and approaches to promote healthy mind-sets throughout their lives. The ways to promote healthy mind-sets are, make healthy food choices, get engaged in extra-curricular activities, communicating and socializing with

approachable individuals, eliminate unconstructive viewpoints, attitudes and behaviours, develop motivation and enthusiasm, develop skills for management of emotional situations, develop skills for managing tense situations, develop skills for increasing personal confidence, and making changes, obtain medical assistance and health care treatment in case of illnesses and health problems and practice yoga and meditation. Apart from implementation of these factors, the individuals need to get engaged in activities, which would give them pleasure. These activities are put into practice as profession as well as hobby. Some of the examples are, artworks, handicrafts, writing books, music, singing, dancing and so forth. When the individuals get engaged in activities of their interest, they contribute in promoting healthy mind-sets. Therefore, it can be stated, in the case of health care counselling, information is provided in terms of promoting healthy mind-sets.

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Promoting healthy lifestyles are regarded as fundamental in maintaining good health and leading to well-being. In health care counselling, the individuals are imparted information in terms of methods to promote healthy lifestyles. Being healthy should be part of one's own lifestyle. Living a healthy lifestyle contributes effectively in preventing diseases and illnesses. Furthermore, it enables the individuals to feel contented in terms of themselves. Promoting a healthy lifestyle enables the individuals to maintain self-esteem and self-image. The individuals need to possess efficient knowledge in terms of measures and ways to promote healthy lifestyles. When they are not aware, they obtain health care counselling. The important factors, which need to be taken into consideration in promoting healthy lifestyles are, diet and nutrition, exercise and physical activities, recognizing one's job duties and responsibilities, socializing, developing a positive attitude, developing self-care and coping skills, possessing the abilities to work under stress,

engage in things, one feels interested in, surround oneself with positive energy and get engaged in activities, which are good and positive and enable the individuals to feel contented and pleasurable (Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle, 2016). Therefore, providing information in terms of methods and approaches in terms of promoting a healthy lifestyle is one of the important areas of health care counselling.

Communication as a strategy for Counselors to Enhance Family healthcare

Communication is the principal tool that clinicians use in providing healthcare. Furthermore, the language identities and linguistic practices of patients, clinicians, and communities are complex and may intersect with other marginalized characteristics such as race, ethnicity, culture, nationality, ancestry, and immigration story, among others (Ali &Watson, 2018). Additionally, the standard use of language in healthcare communication may be ineffective for patients with sensory or cognitive impairments. Despite known benefits, there is a paucity of existing curricula that teaches students and practitioners how to provide equitable patient-centered language-appropriate care. This collection provides educators with practice-based, peer-reviewed resources to teach:

1. Language-concordant clinical and communication skills relevant to specific populations with NELP (e.g., medical Spanish, medical Korean, or other focused medical language educational interventions),
2. Clinical strategies to effectively communicate with patients who have conditions affecting sensory or cognitive function (e.g., deafness, visual impairment, aphasia, autism), and
3. Knowledge and clinical skills needed to access and collaborate with medical interpreters and other health care team members (e.g., patient navigators, community health workers, etc.) who can enhance language-appropriate care.

Counseling Education as Panacea for Family Health Care

Counseling education can be used side by side so as to make it easier for the counsellor to be able to reach out well to the counselee. When the language of the counsellor is simple, it will be possible for the counselee to understand the message being passed across to him or her. The language of the counsellor should be stimulating and encouraging so that the client will be able to grasp the message, upon imparting information in terms of promoting good health and well-being of an individual and the family at large. The language of the counsellor should serve as a measure of preventing family health problems, illnesses and promoting healthy lifestyles. Counseling education for family healthcare takes place simultaneously with medical treatment. When medical practitioners and health care specialists are providing treatment to health problems and illnesses, they need to provide counselling as well. Counselling in terms of health care is considered important in the case of physical as well as psychological health. The important measures to promote health care through language being used by counsellor is to improve communication skills, implementing listening skills, implementing anti-discrimination policies, concentrating on facts, focusing on personality traits of counselees.

Conclusion

Arising from the discussion, counseling education is a contributing factor in providing knowledge and understanding to the individuals in promoting good healthcare delivery and well-being in any family.

Recommendations

The following recommendations as arising from the research are proffered.

1. Appropriate counselling and language education should be providing to all family with regards to their healthcare services.
2. There is a need to be ensured that counselling is suitable to the individuals.
3. The medical practitioners, health care specialists and professional counsellors need to make use of innovative methods in counselling sessions.

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