

Counselling and Language Education as Tools for Promoting Family Healthcare in a Diverse Society in Nigeria

¹Williams-Oladapo Omolara Omolola & ²Famuyiwa Folasade Rotimi
^{1&2}Lagos State University of Education
Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

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 and language. It was shown that, counselling and language education focus 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. Counselling 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 counselling 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 counselling 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, Counselling and language education contribute 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 counselling is suitable to the individuals. The medical practitioners, health care specialists and professional counsellors need to make use of innovative methods in counselling sessions.

Keywords: *Counselling, Language education, Promoting, Family, Healthcare.*

Corresponding Author: Williams-Oladapo Omolara Omolola

Background to the Study

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 and language education is critical elements in the provision of quality family wellbeing. Through counselling, providers help family make and carry out their own choices about healthcare issues. Good counselling leads to improve client satisfaction. A satisfied client promotes family planning, returns when she needs to and continues to use a chosen method. Language education contributes an important means to communicate and interact in order to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world. This interaction develops the disposition to explore the perspectives behind the healthcare practices and to value such intercultural experiences.

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 counselling and language in influencing family healthcare 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.

Language Education

Language is said to be the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people, if we treasure the key and keep it safe, it will unlock the door to untold riches which cannot be guessed at from the other side of the door. The lesson learnt here is that language plays a vital role in the life of a people. Language is a means of communication. Languages use sounds, symbols and words to express a meaning, idea, or thought. Language education means teaching and learning a language. It also includes the efforts made by a learner to improve his/her native language. Language education is a branch of applied linguistics. Applied linguistics offer solutions to language related real-life problems.

Counselling

Okeke (2013), defines counselling 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 counselling 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. Counselling 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.

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 Counselling Education for Family Healthcare

The areas requiring the implementation of counselling 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. These have been stated as follows according to Nair, Leena and Ajithkumar (2016).

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 counsellors, 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 counsees 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 counsees 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.

Language Education as tool for Promoting Family Healthcare

Language 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. Populations with non-English language preferences (NELP) are more likely to experience health inequities, such as worse clinical outcomes and less satisfaction with care compared to English-speaking patients

(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.

Counselling and Language Education as Panacea for Family Health Care

Counselling and language 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. Counselling 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, counselling and language education are contributing factors in providing knowledge and understanding to the individuals in promoting good health 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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