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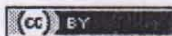
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MEETING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT THROUGH COUNSELLING SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents with hearing impairment are often viewed as psychologically and socially maladjusted by all and sundry. This could be as a result of the inability of the environment to meet their psychological and social needs. Consequently, they have low sense of belonging in the society. Although, various scholars have attempted to address the psychosocial needs of students with hearing impairment through various strategies. This paper addressed the meeting of the psychosocial needs of students with hearing impairment through counselling services. It is strongly believed that counselling services in our schools will help students with hearing impairment to be aware of the various opportunities that will help them to adjust to their environment maximally.

Key words: *Hearing impairment, Psychosocial needs, counselling services*

INTRODUCTION

The period of adolescence have been found by scholars to be characterized with sudden changes psychologically, socially, educationally and physically. The adolescents attempt to adjust the sudden changes that are associated with the period. For instance, Falaye (2001) posited that the period is characterized with shift of interest from parents to peers and ends with development of a capacity for intimacy with peers. It is a period of high ambition and aspiration for oneself. The adolescents in secondary schools face a lot of adjustment situations in order to establish an identity on the journey from dependence, independence and adulthood. Furthermore, Moronkola and Aremu (2004) observed that they (the adolescents) do ask the following questions: Who am I? What attitude will I choose? Whose role will I respect? and what will be my lifestyle? Consequently, they need the help professionals or parents so that they will need not be maladjusted. This is because, they are in a state of confusion during the period.

Adolescents with hearing impairment are not exempted from the adjustment problems in school during the period of adolescence. These problems include relating with peers and other members of the school system, communication barrier, academic difficulties and low self concept. Moreso, Isaiah (2011) posited that the period of adolescence poses very serious adjustment problems for the adolescents with hearing impairment. This is because they have the problems associated with the period of adolescence to contend with and those imposed on them by their impairment. According to him, these problems include academic difficulties, communication barrier, social and psychological maladjustment. In the same vein, Osiki and Nwazuke (1998) observed that adolescents with hearing impairment may be self-blaming, blaming others and or God for their predicament. According to them, they are often psychologically traumatized when the thought of their physical malfunction get to pathological level, which makes them to be highly susceptible to adjustment problems.



The adolescents with hearing impairment need to maximize their potentials and adjust to their environment as their normal hearing counterparts. These could only be achieved through the provision of counselling services in their schools. Counselling is a series of direct contacts with the individual which aims at offering assistance in changing attitude and behaviours (Yusuf, 2000) Also, Perez (2001) in Aiyaleso (2012) posited that counselling consists of a definite structured permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of new orientation. Furthermore, counselling is a process whereby people help others by facilitating growth and positive change through an exercise of self understanding.

Counselling services serve immense assistance in meeting the psychosocial needs of adolescents with hearing impairment. Aiyaleso (2012) submitted that counselling serves the purpose of improving special needs child's psychosocial adjustment. According to him, it also help the child to develop better attitude towards school attendance and learning. Counselling no doubt, will help the adolescents with hearing impairment have high self-concept, relate very well with other members of their environment, which will equally enhance their school adjustment.

Lack of counselling services for individuals with hearing impairment in our schools is worrisome, because it will, no doubt, have negative effect on meeting their psychosocial needs. This paper therefore, aims at addressing the need for providing counselling services for meeting the psychosocial needs of adolescents with hearing impairment in our schools.

Students with Hearing Impairment and Their Psychosocial Needs

Hearing impairment is a generic term indicating hearing loss that may range in severity from mild to profound (Agomoh and Kanu 2011). According to them, individuals with hearing impairment can be grouped into two categories – namely, the deaf and hard of hearing. The deaf are those whose sense of hearing is non-functional for ordinary purposes of life, while the hard of hearing are those whose sense of hearing, although defective, is functional with or without hearing aid. Any individual in the stage of adolescence, who falls within any of these groups (the deaf or hard of hearing) could be referred to as adolescents with hearing impairment. Hearing impairment is a hidden disability. This means that it is not a noticeable disability. It does not show on the face. Agomoh and Kanu (2011) posited that many parents and teachers have difficulty in detecting hearing impairment in their children. The reason, according to them, is that, hearing loss does not show on the face or outward body. Hearing impairment is a hidden disability. Thus, the child may go unnoticed for months or even years without identification. They identified the following symptoms of hearing impairment:

- request or asking for repetition of words spoken.
- cupping the hand to the ear.
- inability to respond to dictations.
- indifference to the tune or rhythm of music.
- avoiding activities that involves oral communication.
- poor speech.
- frequent rubbing of the ear.
- always turning the ear to the direction of sound.
- complaining of ringing or buzzing sound in the ear.
- bending or thrusting the head forward in order to hear always.
- gazing or looking at the lips of a speaker.
- speaking in abnormal low, high or loud voice.
- misinterpreting instructions and
- complaining of pains or discharges from the ears.

Furthermore, Alade (2005) in Isaiah (2011) identified the following symptoms of hearing impairment in the child:

- if the child appears to day-dream and drift off, or is more alert when positioned close to the teacher.



- when the child misunderstands or gives inappropriate responses, particularly if a sequence of spoken instruction is given.
- if the child appears inattentive or restless or distracts others, and is much more responsive in quiet conditions or small groups and
- the child may not turn immediately when called by name, unless other visible signals are given.

Consequently, the negative effect of hearing loss on individuals, could be very serious, if the hearing loss is not well managed. Loss of hearing, if occurs before or after birth can create difficulties in the person's communication, adjustment and learning (Agomoh and Kanu, 2011)

The negative effects of hearing impairment on the child cannot be overemphasized. Hearing impairment affects virtually all aspects of his life. It is a serious handicapping condition that tends to isolate the child from normal living. The child is cut from many of the experiences and opportunities for learning that ordinary children enjoy and has to make constant and considerable efforts to achieve things that come relatively to normal hearing children (Akinpelu, 1998).

Furthermore, hearing impairment has social and personality effect on the child. These are communication barrier, stigmatization and poor self concept. In the light of this, Hallahan and Kaufman (2003) posited that social and personality development in hearing population depend heavily on communication and the situation is no different for those who are deaf. The hearing person, according to them, has little difficulty finding people with whom to communicate. The person, who is deaf, however, may face problems in finding others with whom he or she can converse.

Again, Alade (2005) discovered that academic difficulties are by-products of hearing impairment. She reported that deaf children and, to some extent, hard-of-hearing children have academic difficulties. Other areas affected by hearing impairment, according to her, include – motor ability, peripheral vision, social maturity, visual perception and personality development.

Counselling and Rehabilitating Students with Hearing Impairment

Counselling is a person to person relationship in which one person helps another to resolve an area of conflict that has not been hitherto resolved. The helper, in the relationship, is by virtue of his training and experience, a counsellor who attempts to assist the student (client) in becoming an independent person capable of resolving his conflict situations. Conflict refers to any block that the student is experiencing in his development. Conflict areas include conflict with others or self, lack of information about self and environment and lack of knowledge and skills for personal achievement. (Oladele, 2000) Counselling, therefore, is a process in which the counsellor assists the counsellee to make interpretations of facts relating to a choice plan or adjustment. This assistance may take many forms, such as, educational, vocational, social, personal, emotional or moral.

Counselling can be seen as a process by which individuals are helped by professionals, to understand themselves in relation to others, a procedure of advice, encouragement, information and support in order to adjust to the environment or situations.

The counsellors of students with hearing impairment should possess certain qualities which will enable him to discharge his duties to students with hearing impairment and their families. These qualities according to Onu (2008) include the following:

- He should recognize the worth of human beings.
- He should work with parents and students with hearing impairment emphatically.
- He should be tolerant, willing to cooperate and provide motivational needs of the students with hearing impairment and their family.
- He should be thoroughly armed with information about the disability of the child as well as, the available services, so that he can advise wisely.



- He should be aware of the skills the children need, the approaches and the techniques to apply in order to meet up with the societal demand, disability notwithstanding.

Rehabilitation counselling, is a form of counselling that is focused on helping people who have disabilities achieve their personal, career and independent living goals through a counselling process. Historically, rehabilitation counsellors primarily served working-age adults with disabilities. Rehabilitation counsellors also may provide general and specialized counselling to people with disabilities in public human service programmes and private practice settings.

Again, rehabilitation counsellors are concerned with assisting individuals who have disabilities by maximizing their potential and their independence. Rehabilitation counsellors work with individuals who have a variety of physical, mental and emotional disabilities.

Rehabilitation counselling applies counselling skills to assist individuals with psychiatric, developmental, cognitive, emotional or physical disabilities to achieve their maximum level of independence, integration and participation in the community and the world of work in accordance with each individual's personal goals, career aspirations, and perception of quality of life.

Roles of Rehabilitation Counsellors

Rehabilitation counsellors assist individuals with physical, mental, developmental, cognitive and emotional disabilities to achieve their personal, career and independent living goals in the most integrated setting possible. They engage in a counselling process which include communication, goal setting and beneficial growth or change through self-advocacy, psychological, vocational, social and behavioural interventions. Rehabilitation counsellors utilize many different techniques and modalities, including assessment, diagnosis and treatment planning, counselling, case management and advocacy to modify environmental and attitudinal barriers, placement-related services and utilization of rehabilitation technology.

The Need for Counselling Adolescents with Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment has been observed as having psychological and social effects on the child. It becomes very imperative that counselling services should be provided for adolescents with hearing impairment, in order to adjust to their environment and live meaningful lives. Oladele (2000) corroborated this. He stressed that the presence of any impairment in an individual can negatively affect both his social and psychological development. This in effect can affect the overall adjustment of such individual to the society in which he lives. The presence of hearing impairment can evoke negative psychological or social reactions. Such reactions could affect the performance of the child in school, work and perhaps affect his later adjustment in life. Hence, the provision of counselling services in our schools is very paramount, if the adolescents with hearing impairment would maximize their potentials.

The provision of counselling services will help to solve the psychological and social needs of students with special needs. Direct counselling services, according to him will achieve the following goals:

- fulfilling their potential in academic achievement.
- establishing social acceptable levels of social care.
- developing realistic self-concepts that are in accordance with actual capabilities and opportunities.
- improving interpersonal relationship within the family, school and community.
- progressing in according with expectations in vocational self-sustenance to the degree that is possible.



- evolving a leisure life that provides major satisfactions and contributions to satisfaction of others.

Meeting the psychological needs of adolescents with hearing impairment should be achieved through the efforts of professionals, especially special educators, counsellors and social workers. This is because, it has become evident that reducing the risk of psychosocial problems in children who are deaf has no single solution. The problem should be addressed through the collaborative efforts of professionals.

Conclusion

The adolescents with hearing impairment are capable of competing favourably well with their normal hearing, peers academically or in adjusting to their environment, if they are provided with enabling environment. These can be achieved through effective counselling services, which will enable them discover their potentials and benefit from the opportunities in their environment.

Recommendations for meeting the psychosocial needs of Students with hearing Impairment

The following recommendations are given based on the observations made in this paper:

- The parents, teachers and significant others should show love to the adolescents with hearing impairment. This will boost their sense of belonging in their environment
- There should be early identification of hearing loss in children. This means that parents should seek professional help, as soon as, they notice any sign of hearing loss in their children.
- The government should provide trained counsellors in our schools in order to provide assistance to adolescents with hearing impairment to boost their psychosocial adjustment.
- Inclusive education should be provided for adolescents with hearing impairment, in order to enable them relate with their normal hearing peers.
- In service training should be provided for the counsellors of adolescents with hearing impairment in order to update their knowledge in the counselling and rehabilitation of clients.

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