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GENDER AND EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY IN RIVER STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract
This study examined gender and educational differences in the management of psychosocial needs of the elderly in River State: Implications for counseling. The study adopted descriptive research design. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The population comprised all the elderly (60 years and above) in Rivers State. A sample of 400 Elderly men and women were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The researcher developed a self-structured questionnaire titled "Gender and Educational differences in the Management of Psychosocial needs of the Elderly scale" (GEMPNES). The GEMPNES is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A was made up of demographic data while Section B contained 40 items designed for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the reliability coefficient obtained was (r = 0.84). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer all the research questions; independent sampled t-test and analysis of variance were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels. The study found that, in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender, there was no significant difference but based on educational qualifications there was significant difference. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that inclusive psychosocial support programs that address common elderly needs across genders should be developed.

Keywords: Gender, Management, Psychosocial, Needs, Elderly

Introduction

Nigeria is now home to an estimated 232.7 million individuals (Worldometer, 2024), making it the most populous country in Africa and the sixth most populous globally. Its life expectancy at birth has risen to about 54.6 years overall, with females at approximately 54.9 years and males about 54.3 years. Meanwhile, only around 2.8% of Nigerians are aged 65 and over, underscoring a very youthful population profile. (UN & Worldometer, 2024). The average life expectancy at birth is 51.6 years, and between 2000 and 2005, the country recorded an annual population growth rate of about 2.5%. Notably, individuals aged 60 and above make up around 5% of the total population. As the most populated nation in Africa, Nigeria also hosts the continent's largest elderly population (Kinsella & Velkoff, 2001). Data from the 2006 national census confirmed a noticeable increase in both the number and percentage of older adults (aged 60 and above) in Nigeria. This demographic shift suggests a transformation in the nation's age structure, indicating that the elderly population will likely continue to grow, alongside a gradual rise in life expectancy. These trends carry significant social, psychological, and economic consequences for individuals and the broader society.

Globally, the population of older adults is increasing swiftly: in 2020 there were about 1 billion people aged 60 years or over, and this is projected to rise to 1.4 billion by 2030. Advancements in healthcare, living conditions, and increased access to mental health services have all contributed to longer life spans and better life quality in later years (World Health Organization, 2023). Old age is typically marked by reduced physical capabilities, loss of societal roles and status, and increased dependency. It also brings

a higher risk of accidents, disabilities, and chronic health issues due to a weakening immune system. Consequently, aging is not only a personal concern but also a public health issue, impacting both mental health services and socio-economic systems, and requiring appropriate mental and physical support (Terakye & Guner, 1997).Traditionally, aging in Nigeria was viewed positively, with strong cultural values promoting care for the elderly by family and community members. Historically, Africans have shown deep respect for older individuals, caring for them regardless of biological ties. This cultural norm has weakened over time, leading to changes in how the elderly are treated today (Dimpka, 2015).

Worldwide statistics reveal that the older adult population is expanding at an unprecedented rate, making it the fastest-growing demographic group. As a result, there is a growing need to understand the factors influencing aging and the mental health requirements of older adults, especially over the last decade (Roberto & DiGilio, 2016).Unfortunately, counseling interventions for the elderly are often overlooked due to misconceptions about aging. Yet, older adults represent a significant client group for 21st-century counselors. Geriatric counseling is evolving into a specialized field. One important but often underappreciated aspect is the psychological impact of being cared for, which significantly affects the daily lives and emotional well-being of older individuals (Dixon, 2007). Feeling cared for is a universal human need and becomes increasingly vital in old age. Aging in Nigeria presents complex and varied experiences shaped by geographical, gender, and educational differences. Urban elderly individuals often have better access to healthcare and social services compared to their rural counterparts, who may face limited infrastructure and social isolation (Akinyemi et al., 2019). Gender disparities also influence aging experiences; women tend to live longer but are more likely to encounter economic insecurity and caregiving burdens, especially among those with limited literacy and formal education (Ojo, 2021). The Nigerian government has sought to address some of these challenges through frameworks such as the National Policy on Ageing (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2004) and pension schemes aimed at enhancing the welfare of older adults. However, implementation gaps remain, impacting the overall well-being and social protection of the elderly population, particularly in rural areas where coverage is sparse (Agunbiade & Ogunmefun, 2017). Strengthening policies and targeted interventions are critical to improving quality of life for Nigeria's diverse aging population.

Counselors hold a professional obligation to promote and support the mental health of older adults. To fulfill this role effectively, they need to engage in continuous education and regularly update their understanding of the aging population's unique mental health challenges. This commitment to lifelong learning is essential to adequately respond to the increasing mental health needs of the elderly (American Counseling Association, 2022). Professionals across various disciplines play essential roles in addressing the psychological needs of older people. These responsibilities include educating the public and providing adequate social and psychological support systems. The elderly often face psychological challenges such as loneliness, depression, stress, anxiety, frustration, and apathy. They also experience social issues, including isolation, loss of contact with peers, inability to engage in social events, and unmet basic needs like safety, love, belonging, and self-actualization. Therefore, there is a clear need for research into Gender and Educational differences in the Management of Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly in River State: Implications for Counselling.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that neglect of the elderly has contributed to widespread destitution, largely due to failures by both government institutions and families in fulfilling their responsibilities. Nigeria currently hosts a significant proportion of West Africa's older adult population, estimated at around 12 million in 2020, projected to increase to nearly 39 million by 2050 (United Nations, 2022). This substantial rise signals an impending demographic challenge that demands urgent attention comparable to the focus given to children and youth. Notably, the clinical neglect of older adults in Nigeria especially regarding their mental and emotional health remains pervasive (Adebowale et al., 2021). An important yet often overlooked factor in managing elderly psychosocial needs in Nigeria is the influence of gender roles. Traditional societal expectations typically cast women as primary caregivers within families, responsible for providing emotional and physical care to aging relatives (Olaniyan & Adebayo, 2020).

This caregiving burden disproportionately affects older women, who may themselves be elderly, contributing to increased stress and poorer health outcomes. Conversely, men, traditionally regarded as breadwinners, may face social isolation in old age due to weaker social support networks and less involvement in caregiving roles (Adejumo & Owoaje, 2020). These gendered dynamics shape access to psychosocial resources and coping strategies; women's roles foster closer interpersonal connections but also increase vulnerability to caregiver burnout, while men may lack emotional outlets, exacerbating mental health risks like depression and loneliness.

Educational levels further compound these disparities. Elderly individuals with higher literacy and education tend to have greater awareness of mental health issues and available services, enabling better coping mechanisms and proactive health-seeking behaviors (Ogunleye et al., 2021). In contrast, illiteracy and low educational attainment limit knowledge about mental health, reduce access to support systems, and hinder the ability to navigate healthcare and social services. This divide often leaves less educated elderly populations more susceptible to psychosocial neglect, isolation, and untreated mental health disorders. Depression and social isolation are among the major mental health challenges facing Nigeria's elderly, exacerbated by chronic illnesses, lack of psychological support, and family conflicts (World Health Organization, 2022). Despite the increasing psychosocial needs linked to Nigeria's aging population, counseling and mental health services remain underutilized, partly due to misconceptions that aging is a static life stage requiring minimal intervention (Ogunleye et al., 2021). Moreover, many older adults live in extreme poverty, categorized among the "poorest of the poor," which severely threatens their material, physical, and emotional well-being (Olaniyan & Adebayo, 2020). This economic hardship is visible in the growing number of elderly individuals engaged in street begging in Nigeria and neighboring countries, underscoring gaps in social protection systems.

By 2030, it is estimated that over 20 million elderly Nigerians may experience psychological disorders not linked to organic causes (United Nations, 2022). Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires well-structured programs that incorporate gender-sensitive and education-aware approaches to effectively support elderly psychosocial needs. Unfortunately, research into gerontology remains limited in Nigeria, and current interventions are insufficient to meet this urgent demand (Adejumo & Owoaje, 2020). A comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial needs of the elderly is essential. These needs include managing psychological challenges such as depression, anxiety, frustration, stress, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts, as well as addressing social needs like isolation, lack of basic physiological care, safety, love, belonging, esteem, self-actualization, and access to social activities. Proper knowledge of these challenges is a necessary step toward developing effective solutions. Once these psychosocial issues are well understood, counselors and mental health professionals can design both preventive and remedial interventions to support the elderly in coping more effectively with the realities of aging (Agbawuru, 2008). These considerations underscore the importance of the present study on Gender and Educational differences in the Management of Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly in River State: Implications for Counselling.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate gender and educational differences in the management of psychosocial needs of the elderly in River State: Implications for Counselling. Specifically, other objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the management strategies adopted by the elderly based on gender in Rivers State.
2. To find out the management strategies adopted by the elderly based on educational qualifications in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The research questions on gender and educational differences in the management of psychosocial needs of the elderly in River State: Implications for Counselling are as follows:

1. To what extent does difference exists in the mean rating of the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender?

2. To what extent does difference exists in the mean rating of the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications?

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses on gender and educational differences in the management of psychosocial needs of the elderly in River State: Implications for Counselling are as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the management strategies of psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications.

Methodology

The research design that was used for this study is the descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design was best for this study because it helped the researcher depict Gender and Educational differences in the Management of Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly in an accurate way. Osuala (1987) noted that survey research studies both large and small population to discover the relative incidence, distribution and inter-relations of sociological and psychological variables. It is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. The main idea behind using this type of research design is to better define an opinion or behaviour held by a group of people on a given subject. Rivers State is made up of three senatorial districts; Rivers South East, Rivers West and Rivers East. It is one of the 36 states in Nigeria, situated in the South-South. Rivers State is surrounded in the East by Abia and AkwaIbom States, West by Bayelsa and Delta States and North by Anambra. Rivers State contains mangrove swamps, tropical rainforest, and many rivers. The population of the study consisted of all the aged in Rivers State. The last official census of Rivers State was in 2006. The total number of the population of the state was 5,198,716 and those aged 60 years and above were 266,189 consisting of both male and female for the purpose of this study of which aged persons within the ages of 60 years and above was 5% of the total population (Wikipedia & citypopulation.com).

The multi-purpose and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in choosing the sample. Multi-purpose technique involves dividing the population into strata and selecting representatives from each stratum, before applying stratified random sampling. Stratified sampling is a type of sampling which involves dividing the population into groups (or clusters). There are three senatorial districts in Rivers State, the researcher divided the state into three strata and from each stratum selected the sample as follows; Rivers South East = 140, Rivers West = 130 and Rivers East = 130. 140 elderly people were sampled from Rivers South East because it has the highest population of the aged. The sample comprised 400 aged (220 women and 180 men) in Rivers State who were aged 60 years and above from the total population of the aged. The sample size was calculated using fluid online calculator with confidence level of 95% at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher constructed an instrument titled "Gender and Educational differences in the Management of Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly scale" (GEMPNES). GEMPNES is divided into two sections. Section A was made up of demographic variables such as gender and educational qualifications Section B sought to find out the Management of Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly. GEMPNES comprised 32 items and was responded to on four point modified likert scale of: SA- Strongly Agree (4), A - Agree (3) D - Disagree (2), SD- Strongly Disagree (1).

Face and content validity of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher's supervisor and two test experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port-Harcourt. They scrutinized the items and made some corrections. The corrections were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument (GEMPNES) was established through test- retest method. The questionnaire was administered to 30 aged people in Bayelsa State, who were outside the sample. The administration was done in two instances after a period of two weeks. The scores generated from the two administrations were used in computing the reliability coefficient employing Pearson Product moment correlation. The calculated reliability index for GEMPNES was r =0.84. The researcher administered the questionnaires with the help of research assistants. The researcher and the assistants met the selected elderly persons

when around for pensions and verification exercises at the Local Government Headquarters and explained the purpose of the research to the respondents to ensure they cooperated and filled the questionnaires. The researcher and assistants waited and retrieved only 373 filled copies of the questionnaire, which constituted 93.3% of the initial sample. For data analysis, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while independent sampled t-test and Analysis of variance were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does difference exists in the management strategies of psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Management Strategies of the Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly in Rivers State based on Gender

S/N	ITEMS	Male (n=167)		Female (206)	
			SD		
1.	Aged persons feel better when friends and family members visit them.	3.21	0.62	3.36	0.57
2.	Aged persons feel better when they participate in social events	2.31	0.66	2.24	0.82
3.	Aged persons feel better when they take part in a hobby.	2.08	0.64	2.00	0.76
4.	Aged persons feel better when they participate in relaxation activities.	2.88	0.71	2.86	0.91
5.	Aged persons feel better when they talk to someone about feelings.	1.96	0.65	2.00	0.60
6.	Aged persons feel better when they pray to God about their problems.	2.58	0.64	2.52	0.70
7.	Aged persons go for regular health check-ups and medical care.	2.57	0.66	2.59	0.62
8.	Aged persons take their treatments and medication regularly.	3.28	0.73	3.33	0.65
Grand Mean		**2.61**	**0.67**	**2.61**	**0.70**

Table 1 revealed that the average mean of 2.61 and 2.61 for aged male and female affirmed no difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the Elderly in Rivers State based on gender. That is, both male and female aged persons employed the same management strategies.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender.

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Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Management Strategies of the Psychosocial Needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on Gender

VARIABLES	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Alpha level	Decision
Male	167	2.61	0.67	371	0.075	1.960	0.05	
								H01 accepted
Female	206	2.61	0.70					

Result in Table 2 revealed that the mean score of male and female are 2.61 and 2.61. The standard deviations of their scores are 0.67 and 0.70 respectively. However, when this means difference was subjected to an independent sampled t-test statistics, it was observed that the calculated t-value is less than t-critical at 0.05 level of significance, so null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender.

Research Question Two: To what extent does difference exists in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Management Strategies of the Psychosocial Needs of the Elderly in Rivers State based on Educational Qualifications

S/N	ITEMS	FSLC (n=160)		WAEC/ O'LEVEL (n=94)		FIRST DEGREE (n=90)		MASTERS / Ph'D (n=29)	
			SD		SD		SD		SD
1.	Aged persons feel better when friends and family members visit them.	3.36	0.58	3.26	0.60	3.23	0.62	3.24	0.58
2.	Aged persons feel better when they participate in social events	2.30	0.81	2.26	0.69	2.20	0.74	2.34	0.61
3.	Aged persons feel better when they take part in a hobby.	2.11	0.71	1.94	0.68	2.03	0.73	2.03	0.68
4.	Aged persons feel better when they participate in relaxation activities.	3.03	0.86	2.59	0.74	2.89	0.79	2.83	0.80
5.	Aged persons feel better when they talk to someone about their feelings.	2.02	0.67	1.91	0.48	1.97	0.63	2.07	0.75
6.	Aged persons feel better when they pray to God about their problems.	2.56	0.74	2.56	0.63	2.52	0.64	2.52	0.57
7.	Aged persons go for regular health check-ups and medical care.	2.68	0.64	2.57	0.60	2.40	0.61	2.66	0.72
8.	Aged persons take their treatments and medication regularly.	3.39	0.67	3.18	0.70	3.27	0.72	3.41	0.63
	Grand Mean	**2.68**	**0.71**	**2.53**	**0.64**	**2.56**	**0.68**	**2.64**	**0.67**

Table 3 revealed that all aged persons agreed with the management strategies despite their educational qualification, FSLC had the best management strategies of psychosocial needs (2.68), followed by first degree (=2.64), masters/PhD (=2.56) and O/level (=2.53).

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of the management strategies of psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Management Strategies of the Psychosocial Needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on Educational Qualifications

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.373	3	0.458	4.967	0.002
Within Groups	33.987	369	0.092		
Total	35.360	372			

Table 4 showed that the calculated F-value for educational qualification is 4.967 at degrees of freedom of 3 and 369 and probability level of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of probability ($F_{(3/369)}$=4.967; $p<0.05$). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. There is significant difference in the management strategies of psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications. The direction of the observed significant difference in the mean scores of various educational qualifications was determined using a post hoc comparison by least significant difference (LSD). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Post Hoc Analysis of Mean Gain Differences of Various Educational Qualification

LSD(I) EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	(J) EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
FSLC	WAEC/OLEVEL	0.13723*	0.03944	0.003	0.0326	0.2419
	FIRST DEGREE	0.10432	0.03999	0.057	-0.0018	0.2104
	MASTERS/PhD	0.01475	0.06125	1.000	-0.1477	0.1772
WAEC/OLEVEL	FSLC	-0.13723*	0.03944	0.003	-0.2419	-0.0326
	FIRST DEGREE	-0.03291	0.04476	1.000	-0.1516	0.0858
	MASTERS/PhD	-0.12248	0.06447	0.349	-0.2935	0.0485
FIRST DEGREE	FSLC	-0.10432	0.03999	0.057	-0.2104	0.0018
	WAEC/OLEVEL	0.03291	0.04476	1.000	-0.0858	0.1516
	MASTERS/PhD	-0.08957	0.06480	1.000	-0.2615	0.0823
MASTERS/PhD	FSLC	-0.01475	0.06125	1.000	-0.1772	0.1477
	WAEC/OLEVEL	0.12248	0.06447	0.349	-0.0485	0.2935
	FIRST DEGREE	0.08957	0.06480	1.000	-0.0823	0.2615

This indicated that a higher mean difference between the aged with FSLC and WAEC/Olevel which is 0.137 and contributed most to the significant difference observed ($P<0.05$). Also, the result showed a significant difference between the aged with FSLC and WAEC/Olevel.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one and tested with hypothesis one with the grand mean scores of 2.61(SD=0.67) and 2.61 (SD=0.70) < 2.50 for both male and female aged persons, revealed that the mean score of male and female are 2.61(SD=0.67) and 2.61(SD=0.70) t-test (cal 0.08 <crit1.96) showed that the null hypothesis one (Ho1) is accepted. This implies there was no significant difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on gender. The present finding is in agreement with Yeh et al. (2009) that conducted a study on Gender Differences in Stress and Coping among Elderly Patients on Haemodialysis, no statistical difference was found between men and women with regard to their linking of stress and coping strategies. Similarly, Reker and Woo (2011) indicated no statistically significant gender difference and gender meaning orientation interaction effects, is in agreement with the present study. The present finding is also in disagreement with the finding of Cheng et al. (2021) that in the anxiety model, gender, body pain, physical functioning, positive adaptation, denial and disengagement coping, and spiritual coping showed significant associations, also in the depression model, gender, physical functioning, positive adaptation and spiritual coping showed significant associations. The present finding could be explained based on the fact that at old age, most people develop similar ways of managing psychological and social needs such as relaxation, praying and visiting friends.

Research question two and tested with hypothesis two indicated that the grand mean scores of 2.68 (SD=0.71), 2.53(SD=0.64), 2.56 (SD=0.68) and 2.64 (SD=0.67) < 2.50 as shown in table 3 showed a slight difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications. The result in table 4 showed that the calculated F-value for educational qualification is 4.967 at degrees of freedom of 3 and 369 and probability level of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of probability ($F(3/369)=4.967$; $p<.05$). The hypothesis was therefore rejected. Therefore, there was significant difference in the management strategies of psychosocial needs of the elderly in Rivers State based on educational qualifications. The finding is in agreement with Reker and Woo (2011) whose result of MANCOVA analysis of education qualifications revealed a strong multivariate main effect for meaning orientation management strategy. Similarly, Hooren et al. (2007) study which found that Education qualifications had a substantial effect on cognitive functioning: participants with a middle or high level of education performed better on cognitive tests in life management strategies than did participants with a low level of education is in agreement with the present study. Also, NazGul et al. (2018) conducted a study on Impact of Educational Qualification on Social Support, Social Isolation and Social and Emotional Loneliness: A Study of Senior Citizens, whose finding revealed that educational qualification of the sample had a positive impact on their social support and they were less socially isolated as compared to uneducated senior citizens, is equally consistent with the present finding. The present finding could be explained based on the fact that educated persons must have been exposed on how to manage psychological and social issues while in school, or when working.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study on psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling, the following conclusions were made:

1. There was no significant difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State based on gender.
2. There was significant difference in the management strategies of the psychosocial needs of the aged in Rivers State based on educational qualifications.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Develop inclusive psychosocial support programs that address common elderly needs across genders.
2. Tailor mental health education and counseling services according to educational backgrounds.
3. Incorporate life skills and coping education into adult and elder literacy programs.

4. Advocate for government and NGO support for elderly psychosocial wellbeing with a focus on educational disparities.

Implications for Counselling

The following are the counselling implications of the study:

1. Counselling units should be established in all local government areas of the state to attend to the psychosocial needs of the aged in order to improve their physical and mental wellbeing.
2. Guidance counsellors and social workers should encourage family members of the aged to be empathic, patient and understanding, to avoid siring up tension that will trigger health problems.
3. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to go for routine medical check-ups to ensure their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and avoid visiting quacks for medical treatments.
4. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to participate in social and physical activities which in turn could help them to overcome loneliness and isolation and also help them cope with retirement life.
5. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to accept death with dignity and happiness because it is inevitable, they can also remarry if they so desire after the death of a spouse.
6. Guidance counsellors should encourage the aged to avoid unhealthy lifestyles, eat balanced diet that will improve their health and promote immunity to sicknesses and diseases.
7. Guidance counsellors should engage in mass campaign, seminars, talk shows, etc. to create social inclusion and support for the aged.
8. Guidance counsellors should use mass media to encourage younger persons to respect the aged and always interact with them to help them overcome loneliness.

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