

COUNSELING SERVICES: A TOOL FOR CURBING SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG WOMEN AND GIRL-CHILD IN TARABA STATE.

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Abstract

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) started in December 2019 and spreads to Nigeria on the 27th of February, 2020 which has continued till today. This Study examined the Counseling Services: A tool for Curbing Socio-Economic impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Among Women and Girl-child in Taraba State. The Pandemic took its toll on women as part of the greater population in the informal sector of the Economy due to the lock down directives. The impact of Pandemic on women and Girl – Child in the various areas such as Education, Violence against women, governance participation and access to information, as well as women and girl-child livelihood were discussed. Suggestion recommendation and counseling services are made.

Keywords: *Counseling Services, Socio- Economic Status, Covid-19, women and Girl- Child*

INRODUCTION

Covid -19 is part of a family of virus called corona virus that infect both animal and people. This particular one originated from wuhan in china by the end of 2019, which has about 11 Million china resident (<https://www.webmd.com>). Covid – 19 is a serious infection disease outbreak with nearly 219 Million cases and 4.55 Million deaths (Wikipedia last update: September,2021).

Some region have overcome the third wave of crisis and are facing the start of a fourth. As of August, 2021, the weekly update of the World Health Organization reports that have been over 100 million confirmed cases with more than two million confirmed deaths globally. This disease has initiated a fast-growing global crisis that has taken researchers and policymakers without notice, thus leaving them scrambling to collect and analyze data so that its impact on affected countries can be grasped.

With the prevailing menace of COVID-19 Pandemic, education for the female gender called woman, becomes imperatives, if sustainable national development must be achieve. Woman are known for their contributions in development in developing countries economy, yet their vital contributions to society is over locked, under estimated or ignored by economic planners and policy makers. Breaking these barriers means that they would need to be empowered educationally, economically, socially, psychologically and culturally. It is the only way can possess the knowledge to transform the world to their advantage (Yusuf, 2013)

Barden, Barry, Brodish(2015). As the world begins vaccination to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, preventive measure have been advocated, including physical distancing. The current pandemic and imposed physical/ social distancing policy are emphasizing health inequalities based on gender. Socio economic status, and race, thereby highlighting the discrimination of other such as internally displaced people, those in extreme poverty, people

with disabilities, migrants, and the refugee whose majority are women and children. (Wikipedia) The gendered effect of COVID-19 on women presents a huge challenge that cannot be ignored. Deliberations about the health effects of COVID-19 should include unique conditions that make women more at risk WHO (2020)

In view of the above, this paper would highlight some socio-economic impact due to the COVID-19 in pandemic that are particular to women in Taraba State. The discussion was based COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the following concepts. If the items discussed in this paper are properly taken into consideration, the likelihood of future health crisis would be better managed in Taraba State.

Concepts of Counseling

Sherzer and Stone (2008) asserts that Guidance and Counseling is a professional process assisting individual or group of individuals by a trained Guidance Counselor to understand integrated self, problems and discover alternative solutions to lingering problems. This will pave way for self-actualization and adjustment to environmental conditions. This assumption is that an individual who understood himself in terms of interest, value, beliefs, potentials weaknesses and what is happening around him would function effectively. Guidance and Counseling is relevant to all aspects of human life be it in schools, industries, marriage and family affairs, politics etc.

Yahaya and Idowu (2009) asserts that Guidance Counselors are specially trained to assist people and as such they are professionals. Their personality traits in order of frequency include understanding, sympathetic attitude, friendliness, sense of humor, stability, fact, fairness, tolerance, neatness, calmness patience, objectivity, sincerely, broadmindedness, kindness, pleasantness, social intelligence and poise, while their methods of operation range from less directive to more prescriptive form assistance depending on the client's problems.

Counseling: Counseling is a specialized service between a counselor who is adequately trained in the areas of psychological and a counselee who is trouble by educational, social, vocational or psychological problems with view to providing solutions to these problems (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2010). Counseling so defined, may relate to education, personal vocation areas of life". In other words, Shortzer& Stone (2008), defined counseling as providing a more specialized and more individualized help to a person facing obstacles in his life.

Counseling Services: means any services provided by a counsellor to a client including but not limited to. (a) counseling activities (b) professional activities (c) professional practiced. Research practiced for example counseling services have proved popular with men who value the privacy and anonymity of the phone or internet when exploring potential physical or psychological health issues, respectively.

Counseling service means a service where by a caller is seeking advice in relation to a personal problem such a mental, relationship and emotional problems. The service may consist of actual advice as to the personal problem or information as to where the caller may obtain advice.

Guidance: Biswalo (2006), defined guidance as process of helping an individual to gain self-understanding and self-direction so that he can adjust maximally to his environment. Oladele (2007), on the other hand, viewed guidance as an advice, showing the way, leading, managing or steering a course.

Guidance Counsellor : A Guidance Counsellor is a professionally trained individual who offers help to people towards overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, this may be encountered and towards achieving optimum development of their personal resources (Biswalo 2006)

Meaning of Socio-Economic Status

Barden, Barry and Brodish (2015) defines Socio-Economics (also known as social economic) as the social science that studies how economic activities affects and is shaped by social process in general it analyzes how modern societies progress, stagnate, or regress because of their local regional economy, or the global economy Societies are divided into three groups social, cultural and economic. Socio-Economic also refers to the ways that social and economic factors influence the economy.

Socio-Economic Status (SES) is an economic and sociological combined total measure of person's work experience and of individual's or family's economic access to resources and social position in relation to others. Oakes, Rossi (Feb 2003). When analyze a family's SES, the household income earners, education, and occupation are examined as well as combined income, whereas for an individual's SES only their own attributes are assessed. Recently research has revealed a lesser recognized attribute of SES as perceived financial stress, as it defines the "balance between income and necessary expenses". Perceived financial stress can be tested by deciphering whether a person at the end of each month has more than enough, just enough, or not enough money or resources.

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Socio-Economic Status

UNESCO (2020) reports that emerges of dreaded Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the socio-economic development of the society mostly in under-develop countries in Africa and in particular Nigeria. The total population of students enrolled in Education globally, UNESCO (2020) estimates that over 89% are currently out of school because of Covid-19 closures. These are contexts of extremes poverty, economic vulnerability and crisis where gender disparities in education are highest. In humanitarian contexts, a health pandemic is likely to mean the further erosion of already weak protection structures and education access, even greater stress on livelihoods, and heightened levels of anxiety, fear and worry. As crises exacerbate age, gender and other inequalities, girls especially those from marginalized communities and with disabilities, may be particularly hard hit. Girls within crisis-affected populations face additional discrimination and barriers to participation and access to local authorities.

For those girls that do have access to education, the closure of schools and other education settings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic will present a further barrier to learning, depriving girls of a protective environment and access to sources of life-saving information and psychological support. As dropout rates following school closures, many girls may never return to school, further entrenching gender gaps in education, increasing the likelihood of child marriage and exploitation.

Protection and Violence against women and girl-child

Quarantine measure to limit the spread of Covid-19 are already exacerbating the risks of intimate partner violence and other forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV), as households are place under increased stress by health and economic burdens. These trends are likely to increase

around the world, as evidence shows that all the forms of violence against girls and young women faced outside of emergencies are multiplied in humanitarian context.

Disruption of social and protective networks and decreased access to services, through movement restrictions and service provision all exacerbate the risk of violence against girl and women. Covid-19 pandemic will devastate consequence for women and girl child livelihood, especially in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. Prior experience shows that collapse households' food security will deteriorate, resulting in hunger and malnutrition, especially for children.

Economic stress is also highly likely to increase negative coping strategies, include child labour and early and forced marriage, and recruitment by armed forces and arms groups, increasing risk of sexual exploitation and adolescent pregnancy.

Disease outbreaks exacerbate burdens of unpaid care and domestic work on girls and young women, who bear greater responsibility for caring for elderly and ill family members, while also increasing their risks of infection. School closures are likely to further burden girls and young women by additional childcare responsibilities.

Economic stress during the Ebola crisis as well as other factors such as restriction of movement led to a sharp increase in the price of many staple foods, coinciding with a significant decline in household incomes as a result a diminished economic activity. Furthermore, those stigmatized by Ebola sometimes found that they could not buy food at any price. Understanding the needs, knowledge and concerns of population groups is essential for designing effective public health messaging and response to disease outbreaks. However, girls and young women are less likely to be consulted or represented, which leads to their specific needs not being considered and services being less effective.

They also often have less access to information, lower levels of education and are more likely to be missed in communication efforts, meaning that they are less able to protect themselves and their families and are more vulnerable to misinformation. Girls and young women in refugee communities may face additional barriers to information, including language.

As a result, their needs are likely to be overlooked in Covid-19 responses by national and local authorities. Refugees and asylum seekers also risk having their right disproportionately violated by measures to control the outbreak, including their right to seek asylum.

Importance of Counseling Service in Reducing Covid-19 Pandemic Impact on Women and Girl Child.

In the developed countries of the world the importance of guidance counseling cannot be over emphasized. In fact, in some of these developed world hardly would one be able to distinguish the central objectives. Eitle,(2005) asserted that school guidance is design to assist individual to develop and to accept an integrated picture of themselves and of their roles in the world around them, to test these concepts against reality; and to convert the concepts into reality with satisfaction to themselves and to society. Similarity the American Psychological Association sees counseling as being design to help individuals towards overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, wherever these may be encountered and towards achieving optimum development resources.

Oladele (2007) noted that in Nigeria context, scholars of varied backgrounds have identified the importance of Guidance and Counseling towards the successful implantation of the educational system. Some of these scholars submitted that in the absence of guidance and counseling the central objectives cannot be realized.

Denge (2005) for instance, argued that if our society is not be plagued by a brood or disgruntled frustrated and unrealistic individuals, should be exposed to available opportunities and social expectations in the country through career guidance and counseling. In the same vein, Oladele (2007) realizing the importance of Guidance and Counseling to education asserted that without it in schools the whole programme of education will be meaningless.

Counseling provided by trained professionals can make a profound impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. This service help people navigate difficult life situations, such as death of a loved one, divorce, natural disasters, school stress and the loss of a Job. It provides the tools and insights to manage mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression. Ultimately, counseling empowers people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Onifade and Akinpelu (2001) itemized the central objectives of Guidance and Counseling towards the successful implementation of education objectives in various institutions. He identified the assistance that Guidance and Counseling will render to women populace, parents, counselors and government. This paper, however, will concentrate on the advantages to be derived by Women Counsellors, parent and government.

The will be able to Women will be able to:-

- i. Progress towards a productive and rewarding career through making appropriate and satisfying personal, social and vocation choices;
 - ii. Adhere to the Covid-19 pandemic protocol while going on with their vocational development and skills acquisition.
 - iii. Effect smooth transition from the devastating era of the Covid-19 pandemic to a higher socio-economic status through vocational development and skills acquisition;
 - iv. Remove barrier that might come whilst learning;
 - v. Develop positive image of self, the rough self-direction, and skills in problem-solving and decision making;
 - vi. Participate meaningfully in the opportunities provided by the society in economic and social development activities Counselor on their part will be able to
- a. Understanding better the individual way of learning of each individual for whom they are responsible;
 - b. Understand and utilize the service of the counseling programmes.
 - c. Develop a flexible curriculum to a meaningful education for each individual.

Government will be able to:-

- i. Understand better the women socio-economic development progress;
- ii. Understand information about vocation and occupational opportunities and requirements available to them and the women in the community;
- iii. Develop realistic perception of the women development in relation to their skill and potentials.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 era has brought about various economic hardship couple with the series of restriction measures applied to reduce the spread of pandemic. In view of the fact that Women

Socio Economic status is caused by various factors in society, Guidance and counseling have been suggested as possible panacea that could help in harnessing the potentials of the women and channeling them into vehicles for national development. However even guidance and counseling of women has the problem of acceptability as an intervention process. If the women are not attended to their socio economic – status could become fuel for mal-adaptive and mal adjustive behavior, thus constituting social problems for the nations as a whole. Measures should therefore, be taken to provide good social status for the women; in addition to taking care of the various problems that they face; while trying to actualize their dreams and aspirations. It should always be remember that the women contributes higher to the economic development of the State and Nations that must be accomplished, they only need the enabling environment.

Suggestions

Based on the study of this paper the following counseling implication can be profile.

1. Comity leaders/Religions Leader at all levels should organized seminars on the importance of moral values and promote gender equality across the state and Nigeria in General.
2. Government at all levels should establish counseling centres where professional as core values of governance across the three tiers of government.
3. The stake-holders in the Health Sector should fashion out measures that will promote adequate counseling services in order to reduce the impact of health pandemic among the women and the girl child.
4. Women and girls child should enrolled in vocational skills such as clothing and textiles Banking of cakes, and production of detergent in other to improve their socio economic status within the Covid 19 pandemic era
5. Government at state should involve professional counselors to organize seminar for women on the importance of women participation in National and Economic Development.
6. The counselor should use cognitive theory model to re-orient the mind of the women and the Girl-child on the effect of COVID-19 and measures of up-scaling their skills visa-viz improving their social status.
7. Religions leaders should preach both in the Mosque and in Churches on the need for people to adhere to the COVID-19 pandemic protocol while they go on with their normal business.
8. Government and all key players should address the challenges by devising effective policies with a gender view.

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