

## IMPERATIVE OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL COUNSELLING AMONG BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR EFFECTIVE JOB PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA

<sup>1</sup>Abubakar Boyi Sifawa, Ph.D, <sup>2</sup>Muhammad Binta and <sup>3</sup>Malami Rukayya Tambawal

<sup>1</sup>Directorate of Guidance and Counselling, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto.

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education. Federal University, Gusau

<sup>3</sup>Department of Curriculum Studies, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto

e-mail: boyiabubakar3@gmail.com

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### Abstract

*Teachers in Nigeria today, especially at basic education level, are faced with numerous psychological problems which can adversely affect their job performance at school. The paper looked at psychosocial problems as all the difficulties faced by individuals (more often adolescents) in different areas of personal and social functioning; highlighted some of the causes of psychosocial problems among teachers such as social isolation or loneliness, experiencing discrimination and stigma, social disadvantage, poverty or debt, bereavement (losing someone close to you) etc. Psychosocial counselling was defined as a counselling service aims at helping an individual with psychosocial problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, insecurity, economic hardships, hunger etc. by a professional counsellor to get relieved of the problem at stake. Stages for a successful psychosocial counselling like screening, assessment, planning, intervention and closure were discussed and justification for psychosocial counselling among basic education teachers were highlighted. The paper concluded that, teachers at basic education level are faced with psychosocial problems which adversely affect their job performance. Finally, the paper recommends among others that, as matter of urgency, a workshop should be organized on psychosocial issues among teachers at basic education level with a view to assisting those teachers with psychosocial problems be addressed in good time.*

**Keywords:** Psychosocial Problem, Psychosocial Counselling, Basic Education, Teacher, Job Performance

### Introduction

It is observed with dismay that teaching in Nigeria is associated with various psychosocial issues such as lack of promotion and implementation by government, lack of recognition of teachers by the society, lack of motivation and welfare for the teachers by the government and well to do individuals, uncertainty of job security due to political issues and thinking of life after retirement etc. (Jordans, 2003). This is more apparent at basic education level in Nigeria. Many teachers are victims of one or the other psychosocial problems which may lead to so many work-related problems among teachers of basic education level especially in Nigeria. These consequential and work-related problems that can affect teachers' performance in school include corruption, examination malpractice, teacher absenteeism, lack of interest and passion for the work, poor teacher-student relationship in the school, depression among teachers etc. No doubt, these issues can adversely affect the job performance of teachers at basic education level in Nigeria as whole.

It is against this background that, the paper examined the psychosocial issues associated with teachers at basic education level in Nigeria with a view to highlighting the need for psychosocial counselling to teachers in Nigeria. This would, by extension, boost their morale for effective job performance and effective learning outcome at basic education level in Nigeria. In a bid to develop a paper of such kind and achieve the target goal, the paper discussed around these issues.

### **Concepts of Psychosocial and Psychosocial Problems**

The word “psychosocial” is made from two different words – psycho (logical) and social. Psycho refers to the psyche (mind and or the soul) of a person and social refers to a person’s external relationships and environment. Therefore, thoughts, emotions, feelings, beliefs, desires, behaviors etc. are examples of “psycho” or psychological components of an individual while culture, economy, traditions, spirituality, relationships, family, community, school, social norms and values, friends etc. are examples of social components of an individual. Psychosocial therefore, refers to the influence of social factors on an individual’s behavior and to the interrelation between the two. In other words, psychosocial issues include personal and family problems, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, sexual abuse and violence and how they affect life of an individual (Rutter, 1999).

Psychosocial problems refer to the difficulties faced by individuals (more often adolescents) in different areas of personal and social functioning. Adolescents are vulnerable to psychosocial problems because of physical and physiological changes that occur in their body during this developmental stage (Kafle & Timalina, 2018). However, as a psychological concept, it is concerned with human behaviour generally which could equally affect any human being irrespective of their ages provided that, such individuals suffer from personal and social problems. Impliedly, teachers irrespective of their ages have their own psychosocial problems that affect their jobs at basic education level with particular reference to Nigeria.

### **Causes of Psychosocial Problems**

Psychosocial problems can have a wide range of causes. It is likely that for many people there is a complicated combination of factors – although different people may be more deeply affected by certain things than others. For example, the following factors could potentially result in a period of poor psychosocial wellbeing of teachers:

- trauma, or neglect
- social isolation or loneliness
- experiencing discrimination and stigma
- social disadvantage, poverty or debt
- bereavement (losing someone close to you)
- severe or long-term stress
- having a long-term physical health condition
- unemployment or losing your job
- homelessness or poor housing
- being overloaded with family issues
- drug and alcohol misuse

- domestic violence, bullying or other abuse as an adult
- physical causes – for example, a head injury or a neurological condition such as epilepsy can have an impact on your behaviour and mood (Kafle & Timalisina, 2018).

Although lifestyle factors including work, diet, drugs and lack of sleep can all affect your mental health resulting to psychosocial problems.

### **Concept of Psychosocial Counselling**

Psychosocial counselling may be defined as a counselling service aims at helping an individual with psychosocial problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, insecurity, economic hardships, hunger etc. by a professional counsellor to get relieved of the problem at stake. It is also a counselling service provided by a skilled professional counsellor to an individual, family or group for the purpose of improving the well-being of that family or an individual, alleviating distress from the individual as well as enhancing coping skills for the individual to take the challenges in future occurrence (WHO, 1996). By implication, the issues above have direct bearing with the common psychosocial issues affecting the teachers at basic education level of in Nigeria today.

### **Stages of Conducting Psychological Counselling**

Psychosocial counselling may be provided either one-on-one, with a partner, with family members, or in a support group, and at the site most appropriate for meeting the participant's needs. Experience has shown that, center-based services are the most cost effective in providing easy access, maintaining contact, and assuring consistent service provision. These services include, as identified by WHO (1996), the components of screening, psychosocial assessment, planning, intervention, and closure.

#### **Screening**

The initial process of identifying potential psychosocial problems that may require further intervention and/or assessment is screening the individual (s). The “Tell Us About Yourself” is a psychosocial questionnaire that could be used to acquire information from the affected individual (s). In this case, the professional counsellor is expected to collect information on the pressing psychosocial problem of the individual (teacher) being it environmental, behavioral, social, economic etc. It is that information that would tell the counsellor the psychosocial conditions of the teacher. The counsellor would now use the information as baseline data to assist him (the counsellor) in assisting the individual(s).

#### **Psychosocial Assessment**

At this level, the counsellor would further conduct interview that includes an assessment of the type of psychosocial problem - environmental, emotional, behavioral, and social factors as well as resources and strengths that impact the individual's health and ability to function in his place of work. In other words, this is a confirmation stage of what was responded in the “Tell Us About Yourself” Form. At this stage, the counsellor is expected to take one after the other the information provided in the form by the teacher for discussion. Information that are clear need not to be discussed at this stage rather the grey

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area of the information and some critical ones are being discussed which give clear direction of understanding the problem.

### **Planning**

A joint process of counselling and goal selection between the counsellor and the participant (teacher) which results in the development of the counselling service plan. At this juncture, a plan is expected to be developed on how such psychosocial problem could be resolved under the guidance of the counsellor. Each problem like economic hardships or unimplemented promotions is taken and a means of resolving or helping the teacher to be out of the problem is explored by the counsellor. These could include time to discuss the issue, relevant examples and efforts that would help the teacher to have relief such as citing a similar story of your own case or others, identifying words that are motivational like the problem could be resolved, God is always with you, many have passed this challenge and are comfortable now. These and many should be made available in the counsellor's action plan.

### **Intervention**

This is where the counsellor is expected to support the process of overcoming environmental, emotional, or social problems that are affecting the health and well-being of the individual or her family members, a teacher in our own case. At this stage, the counsellor would implement all the plans made in the previous stage (planning stage) towards helping the individual. Meaning, the counsellor would give treatment, advice, suggestions to the individual based on the information acquired during screening and assessment stages and the already planned counselling actions. This could also follow a sequence from the counselling action plan. The intervention may further include a follow-up session to ensure resolution of issues, reduction of problems, completion of tasks, and/or referrals if any.

### **Closure**

This is the final stage of dealing with individual with psychosocial issues. At this stage the counsellor can formally and finally end the counselling relationship after having achieved different goals with regards to problem under discussion. In other words, upon discontinuing psychosocial counselling services, a closing summary will be completed indicating the reason for closure, the progress achieved, and any continuing service needs if any.

### **Psychosocial Issues Affecting Teachers and Need for Counselling at Basic Education Level**

Psychosocial issues are numerous and are in some cases environment related; depending on how the problem is associated with an individual or group of people. Thus, this paper would focus on psychosocial issues that affect teachers in their workplace only and justify the need for counselling.

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*Lack of Promotion and Implementation*

Promotion is a legal right of a teacher provided he/she meets the requirements. This is highlighted in the National Policy on Education section 9; No. 140a that, Local Governments shall, through their Local Education Authorities (LGEAs) promote teachers (FRN, 20014). However, teachers today suffer a lot or are deprived from promotion and its implementation. Many times, some teachers are promoted in paper but it is not implemented in their salaries. You will find a teacher having been promoted to GL 04, 05, 06, 07 up 08 in paper but with no implementation. The teacher still receives salary of GL 04. This would no doubt affect his psychosocial wellbeing and affect his job performance in school. Such type of teacher needs professional support to encourage him/her to do the needful despite the hardship condition he/she finds him/herself.

*Lack of Recognition and Appreciation*

In the past, teachers were arguably the most important members of our society. They give children purpose, set them up for success as citizens of our world, and inspire in them a drive to do well and succeed in life. The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow, and teachers are critical in making children ready for their future. But such recognition and appreciation have been things of the past especially at basic education level. Alas, teachers are the least paid in the civil service, they are socially neglected in almost every social activity such as government functions, marriage contracts, friendships, ceremonies, festivals etc. And it is part of psychological needs of an individual as indicated by Maslow (1970) where he ranked “belonginess and love needs” (relationship with people, love and to be loved, have friends, affiliations, receive appreciations etc.) as number three in the hierarchy of need. Thus, based on the current situation of teachers of basic education in Nigeria as a whole, they suffer from this need. And that leads to very low self-esteem which also affects their job performance. Individuals in this situation need counselling to improve their psychosocial wellbeing and by extension their job performance.

*Lack of Motivation and Welfare*

Teacher motivation has always been a central problem for leaders and managers in education industry. Unmotivated teachers are likely to spend little or no effort in their jobs, avoid the school as much as possible, exit the school if given the opportunity and produce low quality work. On the other hand, teachers who feel motivated to work are likely to be persistent, creative and productive, turning out high quality work that they willingly undertake (Ganta, 2014). Teachers at basic education level with particular reference to teachers in Nigeria are faced with this challenge. Neither motivated by the Head teachers nor by the government and parents. Motivational programmes like selecting and celebrating the best teacher, most disciplined teacher, most frequent teacher, most hardworking teacher and give them awards is no longer in practice. Giving loans by government such as house loan, car loan, cash loan, leave grants and other welfare packages are no longer a consideration in teaching today. These and many issues affect the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers at basic education level. This informed the need for psychosocial counselling for those teachers to be aware of the present economic situation of the country.

### *Uncertainty of Job Security*

It is a common knowledge that, teachers today are faced with political victimization. Many teachers and Head teachers lose their jobs as a result of party opposition syndrome. The teacher concerned would be victimized by transferring him or her to a school that he/she could not deliver or give his or her maximum input as a result of frustration, lack of good understanding between him/her and his/her employer. Gradually, those teachers would be frustrated and decide to leave the job on their own. If care is not taken, that could be the genesis of other psychosocial problems such as depression, suicide, banditry, armed robbery, cultism etc. Therefore, for teachers who are bound to face these challenges it is deemed necessary to have psychosocial counselling.

### *Thinking of Life after Retirement*

Teachers must have thought of how their lives are going to be after retirement! Without a plan for life after retirement, many retirees find themselves feeling vaguely unfulfilled and restless, craving something more but not knowing what that something might be. Retirement also bears the risk that retirees suffer from the loss of daily routines, physical and/or mental activity, a sense of identity and purpose, and social interactions, which may lead them to adopt unhealthy behaviors (David, Johnson & Lee, 2009 cited by Abubakar, 2010). Many of our teachers at basic education level are not exposed to life preparations after retirement and thus they are bound to have these psychosocial issues through thinking how my life is going to be. Therefore, the paper sees the need to counsel these of type teachers on areas like entrepreneurship, self-reliance, self-contentment as well as financial management skills. This would no doubt assist them in running their lives after retirement.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers at basic education level are faced with psychosocial problems which adversely affect their job performance. They are consciously or unconsciously associated with feelings of lack of promotion and implementation, lack of recognition by the society, lack of motivation and welfare from the side of the government, uncertainty of job security as a result of political victimization and thinking of life after retirement. This made it necessary for State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) to take remedial measures to help these teachers.

### **Recommendations**

1. A workshop should be organized on psychosocial issues among teachers at basic education level with a view to assisting those teachers with psychosocial problems and be addressed in good time.
2. Counselling Association of Nigeria – State Chapters (CASSON) can assist in making an advocacy and sensitization visits to governments to understand better the risks in denying these teachers' entitlements such as implementation of promotions, leave grants etc. as when due as this will help in making them happy and perform their jobs maximally.
3. UBEC through SUBEBs should establish and ensure functional guidance and counselling centers in all basic education schools. This will go a long way in guiding and counselling teachers with psychosocial issues.

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