International Journal of Innovative Psychology & Social Development 14 (3):360-366, July-Sept, 2026

© SEAHI PUBLICATIONS, 2026 www.seahipublications.org **ISSN: 2467-8546**

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.22542608

Ageing Happily Through Counselling Services

Dr. Sadiya H. Magaji[1]; Dr. Benedicta O. Okolie[2] & Dr. Abdullahi Sulaiman Dange[3]

[1,2]Department of Guidance and Counselling,
Shehu Shagari University of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria
Sadiyuhalirumagaji68@gmail.com
Bebedicta.okolie@ssues.edu.ng

[2]College of Arts and Humanities,
Ummaru Ali Shinkafi Polytechnics Sokoto, Nigeria
Email abdullahisulaimanmandanga@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This paper examined ageing happily and gracefully through counselling services. Ageing is seen as a process of growing old and a gradual biological impairment of usual functioning. It is an inescapable and continuous process in man which connotes deterioration or degenerative changes in our biological, physiological, psychological and social make up. The work highlighted the reasons why people fear old age, the characteristic features of the aged, their problems and reasons why people grow old fast. Counselling services available to help the aged attain and grow through this last phase of life with happiness and minimal difficulties were x-rayed. Such services include retirement counselling, family and marital counselling, dietary counselling, stress/depression counseling, spiritual counselling and grooming counselling among others. It was concluded that i counselling services are therefore inevitable if we want our old people to continue ageing happily and gracefully.
Keywords: Ageing, happily, gracefully, counselling.

INTRODUCTION

Ageing is something we all do but understand very little. It is a process of growing old and a gradual biological impairment of usual functioning. We could list things that change as we age (memory loss, wrinkles, muscles loss, balance trouble etc.) but no one really understand what ageing is, why it happens and how to stop it.

Naturally ageing is associated with some goodies like several accomplishments in life, the fulfilled dreams, the arrival of children, grand children and great grand children and wealth of wisdom and experiences. When these accomplishments are recounted, a person should normally be happy and so satisfied that ageing should be desired by all and sundry.

On the contrary most human being across the globe today exhibit some psychological nervousness and fear at least covertly when old age starts in earnest.(Denga and Udoh 2005) This nervousness and fear could be attributed due to the fear of death. This is because death is regarded as the next door neighbour to old age even though we believe that death can take life at any age. Normally when a human being is born, he grows through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age and dies. It is logical therefore to begin to view death on the life's horizon as we age towards it.

Ageing is feared by many for the string of losses that accompany it. As one grows older, he begins to sustain losses in physical strength. The youthful, vibrant and beautiful appearance begins to fade,

aggressiveness in business and other forms of economic pursuits begins to wane, and level of participation in social life declines. Our general strength begins to slow down even against our better judgment then we begin to fear the final loss of our dear life itself.

Apart from these, old age which used to be a thing of joy in our culture where old people were highly respected and obeyed is no more regarded nor respected. In the past, the old man was usually surrounded by his people (children and grand children), both his children and other people would give him presents and take problems to him for him to use his wealth of experiences and wisdom to resolve. The young waited on an old man with awed reverence and felt dwarfed by the wisdom of the old great mind. Then they were (the old) happy inspite of all the natural problems associated with old age simply because they were cared for. but today thing are different. Old people are now considered to be a burden and in some cases a source of witchcraft. They are isolated, nobody wants to associate with them. They are even feared in some quarters. The younger ones actually want them dead. The Nigerian society has become so youth oriented that old age has lost its fascination. Nobody is interested in the welfare of the old even the old person's children. Ageism is the order of the day. {Tambawal M. 2025}

It should be noted that though ageing is continuous, its processes are uneven and largely dependent on both genetic and environmental circumstances. This means therefore that ageing is individualized. Some people grow old faster than others. Some live happily as they age while some others don't due to circumstances surrounding them. This paper therefore, will examine the concept of ageing, the aged, characteristic features of ageing, reasons why people grow old fast, problems of the aged, counseling services for ageing happily and gracefully, recommendations, and conclusion.

WHAT IS AGEING?

Ageing is a process and the process is better observed or experienced than defined precisely. Although everyone is familiar with ageing, defining it is not so straight forward. It is in fact a mysterious and continuous process that happens as far as one is still breathing. Ageing or growing old actually starts at conception and stops at death. Old age comprises of four dimensions - chorological, biological, psychological and social dimensions. It is a process that is better observed or experienced than defined precisely. However, ageing has been variously defined for instance the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines it as "the process of growing old"…Ageing can also be defined as "a progressive functional decline or a gradual deterioration of physiological function with age including a decrease in fecundity" (Lopez-O 2013).

According to Joao de Magahaes(2013) ageing is "the intrinsic inevitable and irreversible age related process of loss of viability and increase in vulnerability. Human ageing is associated with a wide range of physiological changes that not only make us more susceptible to death but limit our normal functions and render us more susceptible to a number of diseases".

Ageing is also defined as "a combination of changes in our body and the impact of what we do with our bodies" (Mark Stibich 2014)

From the on-going, I see ageing as a process of growing old and a gradual biological impairment of usual functioning. It is the impact of time on our bodies.

As people grow old, changes in their lives encompass everything from lifestyle to health, their capacity to do things through to those activities that they choose to pursue. As one ages, mobility can gradually decrease, the need for medical interventions may increase and old habits may need to be changed or modified.

There is more to ageing than just the physical changes, many other things happen as a person grows old which can and does impact on their state of mid. A number of role transitions and loses heighten the vulnerability of the older person like children leaving him, retirement, death of a spouse, career change, isolation, a deficit in personal income and independence. These changes generally require adjustments in both outlook and lifestyle. These adjustment can be achieved through counselling services.

It must be emphasized that the ageing or getting old is not uniform for everybody. The rate varies from person to person accor {Tambawal, 2025}

ding to the state of health, natural body constitution, personal lifestyle and the type of routine activity in which a person is engaged, dietary habits, physical activities and so on (Denga & Udoh 2005). An overdose of tough physical activities tend to drain away energy and thus weaken the victims who then start ageing rapidly. The rate of ageing could be proportional to the amount physical activities to which the person is exposed to. It can therefore be said that many old persons are living in various stages of health, ability and happiness.

Early stage of old age is a pleasant time- children are grown, retirement from work, time to pursue interests but the later part of old age is old age in the real meaning of it tends to be negative. From the ongoing, we discover that old age is the later part of life,- the period of life after youth and middle age. In this work, the aged is seen as anybody who has reached sixty (60) years and above. Features of the Aged

Ageing is seen by various changes in an individual's physical appearance, changes in behavior as well as physiological inadequacies. Some of the features of the aged as highlighted in Denga and Udoh include the following:

i. Changes in body's shape and posture- The general body tends to wear a sagging appearance and a bent posture in the later part of old age.
ii. Changes in the skin texture which now becomes flabby, less elastic, dry and wrinkled which is due to structural alterations in connective tissue elements, loss of collagen fibres and loss of subcutaneous fat.
iii. Graying, thinning and loss of hair as a result of lowered sex hormone level and decreased protein synthesis.
iv. Decline in visual and hearing acuity
v. Reduction in the sense of smell
vi. Decline in the heart output and blood supply
vii. Reduction in kidney functions
viii. Reduction in stomach and intestinal motility
ix. Decreased vital and total capacity of the lungs
x. Dental problems increases-tooth decay, infections and loss of teeth, which affects speech.

Other features of the aged are

i. Functional decline in the cardiovascular system
ii. Mobility of the joints is diminished and movement becomes difficult.
iii. Gradual reduction in muscular strength.
iv. Decrease in the function of the gonads and atrophy of the ovaries and other reproductive organs
v. Set in one's ways-describes the mindset of the old – wants to do thing in the accordance with the good old days.
vi. Urinary incontinence and
vii. Deterioration of the immune system (http://www.web ind.com/healthyageing-Normalaging.Accessed Nov.30 2013)

In spite of the above features brought about by old age, senescence is not a disease but a normal stage of human life cycle which calls for some understanding and counselling in order to go through it to the end with joy, minimal stress and less pain.

Reason Why People Grow Old Fast

The rate of ageing varies from person to person. It is individualized. Though ageing is inevitable, it's process is uneven and largely dependent on both genetic factors as well as environmental circumstances. Some of the environmental reasons why people grow old fast include.

Social reasons – Some forms of social participation may accelerate the aging process. Young people who indulge heavily into bad habits like excessive alcoholism, unbridled sexual activity, smoking and other social orgies may run down their vitality, thus rendering them vitiated and emasculated rather early in life thus the massive expenditure of body substance through reckless social activities may lead to premature ageing.

Economic reasons (poverty)- An era of economic down-turn may accelerate aging as people are overstretching themselves inordinately to unimaginable limits to make ends meet. People who overwork

or engage in excessive overtone in order to improve their economic standing tend to became rather spent from time to time, depressed, weary and burn out. A repeated or protracted incidence of body abuse leads to premature aging at least in appearance.

Again, economic hardship can seriously affect the quality of life including the nutritional content of what people eat. Malnutrition could accelerate the aging process. Poverty has a lot to do with inability to seek dependable medical care. Generally poor people look older than their actual age because lack of basic wants is capable of causing social, psychological and medical problems. These problems acting together may accelerate aging.

Psychological reasons -Feelings of anger, aggression, irritation, hate, melancholia, rejection and dejection brings about an emotional over load (Deuga & Udoh 2005) a protracted experience of those may fasten aging. Psychologically speaking, one of the ways to grow old fast is to drift into sadism which manifest in wrinkles on the face and internal combustion in addition to solem, sober and melancholic look most of the time. Such people isolate themselves most of the time because talking to people bothers them and this could fasten the rate of aging.

Physiological reasons

Those persons who do not participate in physical exercises whether indoor or outdoor soon lose the shine of youth and assume the look of much older persons.

Dietary habits - There is a solid link between longevity, nutrition and health. (Denga & Udoh 2005). If we do not want to grow old fast, then we need to mind what we eat and drink. Calorie restriction enhances health and can slow down our rate of growing old fast. If people overindulge in eating food items & drinks that do not nourish the body, they stand a good chance of looking bad, ageing faster and losing vitality. It is therefore logical to state that an unbalanced or poor diet accelerates aging.

medical reasons -It is a known fact that the availability of medical care can slow down our ageing process. When people do not take care of their medical conditions appropriately they tend to grow old fast and even die prematurely.

Considering the above reasons why people grow old fast, it is therefore pertinent that we seek healthy living by avoiding all habits that are dangerous to our health and life expectancy.

Problems of the Aged

Although many people look forward to and pray for a healthy and fulfilling old age, this stage of life is often perceived as fearful, sensitive, stressful, and challenging. This perception arises from the numerous difficulties that accompany ageing. These problems are generally physiological, psychological, nutritional, and social in nature. When not properly managed, they can lead to maladjustment, bitterness, unhappiness, and even a desire for death (Santrock, 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

Major Problems of the Aged

1. Retirement: Retirement often results in loss of income, reduced social status, and diminished sense of purpose, which may negatively affect adjustment in old age (Atchley & Barusch, 2017).
2. Depression: Older adults frequently experience depression characterized by feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, sadness, and inadequacy, often linked to declining health and social isolation (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020).
3. Loneliness and Isolation: Reduced social interaction and separation from loved ones contribute significantly to loneliness and isolation among the aged (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).
4. Ageism: Ageism involves discrimination and negative stereotypes against older adults, which can lower their self-esteem and overall well-being (WHO, 2022).
5. Emotional and Psychological Challenges: Older adults may experience grief, irritability, low mood, self-criticism, and low self-concept. In women, menopause may also contribute to emotional instability (Santrock, 2021).
6. Socio-Economic Loss: Retirement and reduced earning capacity often limit participation in social and recreational activities (Atchley & Barusch, 2017).
7. Physical Decline: Ageing is associated with reduced strength, mobility, and increased susceptibility to chronic illnesses (WHO, 2022).

8. Negative Attitudes from Younger People: Disrespect or neglect from younger generations may lead to feelings of rejection and worthlessness (Nelson, 2016).
9. Empty Nest Syndrome: Feelings of loneliness and loss may occur when children leave home, reducing parental roles and responsibilities (Santrock, 2021).
10. Bereavement: The loss of a spouse, friends, or loved ones can result in profound emotional distress and grief (Stroebe et al., 2017).
11. Separateness: Isolation due to widowhood or divorce further intensifies emotional distress in old age (Atchley & Barusch, 2017).
12. Nutritional Problems: Older adults may face poor nutrition due to reduced appetite, financial constraints, or difficulty accessing healthy food (WHO, 2022).
13. Failing Health: Chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis are common among the elderly (WHO, 2022).
14. Boredom and Reduced Sexual Activity: Limited engagement in meaningful activities and physiological changes often reduce sexual activity and life satisfaction (DeLamater, 2012).
15. Cognitive and Health Disorders: Conditions such as dementia, memory loss, and obesity significantly affect functioning and quality of life (Alzheimer's Association, 2023).

Other Related Problems

Other challenges include Physio-sensory impairments (e.g., vision and hearing loss), intellectual and learning difficulties, functional limitations, and behavioral and cognitive problems (Santrock, 2021). Among all these challenges, the most disturbing for many elderly individuals is the feeling of uselessness and lack of belonging, which negatively impacts their psychological well-being and adjustment (Nelson, 2016).

Counselling Services for the Aged

Several counselling services are available to slow down the negative effects of ageing and alleviate associated problems, enabling older adults to live happily and meaningfully. These services address the psychological, social, physical, and spiritual needs of the elderly (Santrock, 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

1. Retirement Counselling: Retirement Counselling helps older adults adjust to life after active employment. It prepares them to cope with reduced income, loss of work identity, boredom, depression, and dependence on others. Proper guidance enables retirees to remain productive and psychologically balanced (Atchley & Barusch, 2017).
2. Dietary/Nutritional Counselling: Nutrition plays a critical role in health and longevity. Counselling focuses on the quality rather than quantity of food, emphasizing balanced diets that support ageing bodies. Due to physiological changes such as reduced metabolic rate, decreased digestive efficiency, and lower nutrient absorption, older adults are guided on appropriate diets, including increased intake of fruits, vegetables, and supplements where necessary (WHO, 2022; Brownie,2006). Adherence to proper nutritional practices promotes healthy and graceful ageing.
3. Family Counselling: Family Counselling involves working with family members to ensure that the aged feel loved, respected, and included. Counsellors guide families on how to communicate effectively, show appreciation, and integrate older adults into family activities. This helps reduce feelings of loneliness, rejection, and uselessness, thereby improving their emotional well-being (Gladding, 2018).
4. Marital Counselling: Marital Counselling addresses issues such as bereavement, separation, poor communication, reduced sexual activity, menopause, and empty-nest syndrome. Through grief and depression Counselling, elderly individuals are helped to cope with the loss of a spouse, reducing emotional trauma, anxiety, and depression (Stroebe et al., 2017). Counselling also helps couples understand age-related changes in sexuality and dispels myths about menopause, encouraging healthy marital relationships (DeLamater, 2012).
5. Stress Counselling: Older adults often experience stress related to health, finances, and social changes. Stress Counselling uses psychosocial techniques to reduce irritability, hostility, anxiety,

and withdrawal, thereby promoting emotional stability and well-being (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020).

6. Spiritual Counselling: Spiritual Counselling focuses on enhancing a sense of purpose, meaning, and self-actualization. Counsellors help the aged understand their worth, interconnectedness with others, and the value of their life experiences. Encouraging prayer, faith, and participation in religious activities provides comfort, hope, and emotional strength, especially when aligned with the individual's beliefs (Koenig, 2012).
7. Grooming Counselling: Grooming Counselling helps older adults maintain healthy lifestyles and positive self-image through the following:

a. Social Participation: The aged are encouraged to engage in social activities such as community meetings, religious gatherings, and ceremonies. Social interaction reduces loneliness and promotes a sense of belonging (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).
b. Physical Exercise: Regular physical activity such as walking and light exercises improves physical fitness, enhances mood, and promotes overall health (WHO, 2022).
c. Skin Care and Personal Hygiene: Older adults are guided on maintaining proper hygiene and skincare through the use of mild soaps, oils, and clean clothing, which improves health and self-esteem.
d. Rest and Medicare: Adequate rest, sleep, and access to proper healthcare are essential for reducing stress and maintaining good health in old age (WHO, 2022).
e. Personal Grooming and Positive Reminiscence: Encouraging practices such as regular haircuts, neat appearance, and recalling positive youthful experiences helps improve self-image and psychological satisfaction. Reminiscence therapy has been shown to enhance well-being in older adults (Westerhof et al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

Counselling services for the aged play a vital role in addressing the complex challenges associated with ageing. By providing emotional support, health education, and social guidance, these services help older adults maintain dignity, happiness, and a sense of belonging, thereby promoting successful ageing. Ageing in humans is an inescapable phenomenon but it's onset and process could be delayed while longevity and happiness enhanced. Individuals involved can be helped to attain and pass through old age with minimal difficulties and achieve happiness through Counselling services. Based on the above, it is concluded that Counselling services are inevitable if we want our old people to continue ageing happily and gracefully. Recommendations

From the writer's observations, majority of Nigerians do not avail themselves of the counselling services because of ignorance. It is therefore recommended that counsellors should create awareness through enlightenment programs like conferences, workshops and seminars where teachings on retirement, dietary, spiritual and grooming counseling will be given. This could be done in alliance with both state and local governments.

It is also recommended that geriatric counselling be an integral part of undergraduate and graduate curriculum in Guidance and Counselling

REFERENCES

Alzheimer's Association. (2023). 2023 Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. https://www.alz.org

American Psychological Association. (2020). Depression and older adults. https://www.apa.org

American Psychological Association. (2020). Stress and aging. https://www.apa.org

Atchley, R. C., & Barusch, A. S. (2017). Social forces and aging: An introduction to social gerontology (14th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Brownie, S. (2006). Why are elderly individuals at risk of nutritional deficiency? International Journal of Nursing Practice, 12(2), 110–118.

DeLamater, J. (2012). Sexual expression in later life: A review and synthesis. Journal of Sex Research, 49(2–3), 125–141.

Denga, D. I., & Udoh, P. B. (2005). How to grow old slowly and gracefully. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers.

Gladding, S. T. (2018). Family therapy: History, theory, and practice (7th ed.). Pearson.

Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010). Loneliness matters: A theoretical and empirical review. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 19(2), 70–74.

Hornby, A. S. (2001). Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary: Special Price Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Joa o de Mangahaes. (2013). http://www.senescence-Age related changes

Koenig, H. G. (2012). Religion, spirituality, and health. ISRN Psychiatry, 2012, 1–33. Lepez-O. (2013). http://www.senescence-Age related changes

Mark, S. (2014, May). http://longevity.com/010/whyage

Nelson, T. D. (2016). Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons (2nd ed.). MIT Press.

Santrock, J. W. (2021). Life-span development (18th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Stroebe, M., Schut, H., & Boerner, K. (2017). Cautioning health-care professionals: Bereaved persons are misguided through stages of grief. Omega: Journal of Death and Dying, 74(4), 455–473.

Westerhof, G. J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., & Webster, J. D. (2010). Reminiscence and mental health. Aging & Mental Health, 14(6), 697–708.

World Health Organization. (2022). Ageing and health. https://www.who.int

www.counselor.hence./com/.../spiritual

www.one medical.com/…/whatis20mar, 2013

"Healthy-aging-normal ageing." http://wd.com/healthyageing-Normal aging (Accessed Nov. 30, 2013