The Need For Counseling Services amongst Older Persons in Nursing Homes

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ABSTRACT

This study is related to social services offered to elderly residents in nine Rumah Seri Kenangan in Malaysia. Rumah Seri Kenangan offers a range of activities for the purpose of maintaining the well-being of these residents. This study seeks to analyze the need for counseling service among the elderly residents. Using a convenience sampling technique, a total of 203 elderly persons in nine Rumah Seri Kenangan were selected. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. Data for the quantitative analysis are derived from face-to-face interviews. Data of this study demonstrates that the average age of respondent is 70 years old. Most of them are male and completed their education at primary school level. In term of the need for counseling, the study reveals that most of the respondents have their own problems that highlight the need of counseling. The study concludes the counseling is very important for the maintaining of the well-being of the elderly.

Key words: Older persons; elderly; senior citizens; counseling; neglected

Introduction

In Malaysia, as in other part of developing countries, older persons in general and elderly parents in particular will be living with their children when they are physically dependent. The elderly parents will receive support and care from their children and other family members. However this kind of support system nowadays faces severe challenges (Wan-Ibrahim & Zainab, 2009). The family support for the elderly has shown signs of weakening. Tan (1993) shows that many of the families find it increasingly difficult to care for their own older persons. Families such as those living in slums and squatter areas, and those living under the poverty line, are unlikely to be able to provide adequate economic support and care for their old parents. Therefore the percentage of older persons living in nursing homes has recently risen significantly.

Nursing homes, popularly known as Rumah Seri Kenangan in Malaysia, are an institution where its function is to give care and support to older persons who are poor to increase their well-being. One of the activities offers for the purpose of maintaining the well-being of older residents is counseling services. Zainab and Wan-Ibrahim (2008) indicate that quite a sizable proportion of older residents in Rumah Seri Kenangan felt they feared facing loneliness indicating that they need counseling service. They believed counseling services can assist them in overcoming emotional and psychological problems. Their findings suggest most of the elderly residents need to have counseling services to cope with their daily problems.

Counseling is basically a counselor-client relationship. Patterson (Hansen, Stevic and Warner, 1977) states that there are five reasons why this kind of relationship is so significant. First, to help client resolve problems that he has not been able to resolve through other relationships. Although other relationships are beneficial, such relationships have not been sufficient to resolve a particular problem. Second, counseling relationship is formal and structured. This relationship is not continued on a causal social basis. Third, counseling relationship is limited to the therapeutic hour. Fourth, it is a closer and deeper relationship than ordinary social relationships, and fifth, the counseling relationship is powerful because the principles of good human relationships are applied purposefully without the banalities of ordinary social interaction. This article presents the results of a
quantitative survey on the older person’s residents in all nine Rumah Seri Kenangan, in Malaysia. The survey basically conducted to analyze the problems they are facing. This paper also sought to explore the need of counseling services amongst the elderly residents in Rumah Seri Kenangan.

Materials And Method

The present paper is aimed at exploring the need of counseling service among the elderly residents in nine Rumah Seri Kenangan, Malaysia. The data reported in this paper is part of a larger study conducted to examine the religious participation, self concept and the need for counseling service among the elderly residents in nine Rumah Seri Kenangan in the late 2007 and early 2009 (Zainab Ismail, Wan-Ibrahim, Siti Rugayah Hj. Tibek, Ideris Endut & Fariza Md. Sham, 2010).

The design used in that study was a mixed method approach, which is a combination of the sociological method of face-to-face interviews, and the anthropological method of participant-observation. The main objective of that study was to gauge the level of self-concept among the elderly in Rumah Seri Kenangan. Using a non-probability sampling technique, a total of 203 elderly residents in nine Rumah Seri Kenangan nationwide are selected. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. Major data for the quantitative analysis are derived from face-to-face interviews. Data were collected during 90-minute structured interviews conducted in Rumah Seri Kenangan. The interview schedule, containing both closed-ended and open questions, covered a wide range of questions regarding demographic, socio-economic, marriage and family background, health and living arrangement. Data for the qualitative analysis are derived from unstructured interviews, information from key informants, focus group discussion, and field observation.

From the study, a wide range of data has been collected. Relevant to this paper are information related to the need of counseling service among these elderly persons. From unstructured interviews and focus group discussion, it was revealed that the majority of older persons in Rumah Seri Kenangan need to have counseling services. Thus, this paper presents the result of the study, especially information on the need of counseling service gathered from focus group discussion.

Results And Discussions

Socio-demographic Profile:

The majority of the elderly population in this study was man (68%). The average age of respondents was 70.3 years, while median age was 69.0, and the mod was 65 years. The age of oldest respondent was 95. The majority of the elderly respondents are categorized as young elderly. These responden came from various parts in Malaysia such as Johor, Kedah, Perak, Kelantan, Pulau Pinang, Perlis, Terengganu, and Selangor. There was also one respondend from Indonesia and one from India.

In terms of academic qualification, the educational attainment or educational level of the respondents reflect the level of academic achievement among the Malaysian prior to their gaining of independence from British in the past several decades (1957). At that time not many people, has the opportunity to attend formal school. As all of the elderly respondents are those who were brought up at the time before independence, they did not have much opportunity to attend formal school. Analyzing the educational attainment, the level of education of the respondents was quite low. About half of them never attend formal school (58%). This figure remains the same for elementary school level. The elderly who attended formal school above than that level is not significant. There are some of these elderly who attended informal religious school. Nearly half of the elderly respondents are self-workers (45.8%). Those who work with government are very small (11.3%). Those who reported as working before entering nursing home, the majority of them work in agriculture. Nearly all of the elderly had a very low income. Result of the study shows that nearly 40% of the elderly has income between RM101.00 – RM600.00 a month. They belonged to one of three marital statuses; single, divorced and widowed elderly, and still have their own children. They come from various states in Malaysia

The Need For Counseling Services:

The need for counseling services of older persons has been detected through focus group discussions. The research findings show that most of the elderly residents have some kind of problems indicating that they need counseling. With regards the self-concept, the elderly respondents have a moderate level of self-concept. Among the daily psychosocial problems they faced include stress, feelings of being neglected, and the management problems of Rumah Seri Kenangan. Based on these problems, these elderly need to have counseling to cope with their daily psychosocial problems.
Stress and Personal Problems:

Through group discussion it was revealed that stress was a major problem of older persons Rumah Seri Kenangan. Stress is a state of tension produced by pressures or conflicting demands with which the person cannot adequately cope (Jary and Jary, 1995). Because of the loss of functions within the family and in social relationships, many elderly people tend to withdraw from being actively engaged in any social activity. Problems in relation to their children also lead these older persons facing the problem of stress. From group discussion conducted, the older persons need counselling to overcome this problem. The majority of the elderly respondents who were interviewed expressed that the Rumah Sri Kenangan and its parties must "providing advice, motivation and counselling," to help them reduce their stress and other psychosocial problems.

Feelings of Being Neglected:

Most of the older persons felt themselves is being neglected by their children and peers. Because of this, they accept to live at the Rumah Seri Kenangan. From focus group discussion, this study found that the majority of elderly at Rumah Seri Kenangan feel that their children should "pay attention, understand and be aware of their responsibilities" to them. They are anxious for their children to "bring them out from the Rumah Seri Kenangan" and "take care of their own elderly parents". If the children are unable to bring them out from Rumah Seri Kenangan, and if their children cannot taking care their elderly parents in their own house, they placed their hope that their children can visit them frequently at Rumah Seri Kenangan.

Management Problems at the Rumah Seri Kenangan:

It is also found that the management of the Rumah Seri Kenangan was also contributed to the need of the counselling services among the older persons. This is because from the group discussion, the styles of management of the Rumah Seri Kenangan also create problems to these older persons. Most of the participants in the focus group discussion felt that the management, particularly some officers of the Rumah Seri Kenangan were not quite friendly. Following the group discussion conducted, the elderly residents were also hoped that the management of the Rumah Seri Kenangan can do the following: (1) the Management could be more friendly and respect towards elderly residents, (2) provide financial support, (3) provide work and activities, (4) monitor theft cases, (5) separate the mentally ill residents, (6) segregate inmates according to ethnicity, (7) provide flexibility to go for outing, shopping or visiting graves, (8) provide better health care, (9) provide good food (no flavour), (10) organise more religious programs, and (11) obligate children to care for the elderly.

Conclusion:

In Malaysia, as in other part of developing countries, older persons in general and elderly parents in particular will be living with their children when they are physically dependent. The elderly parents will receive support and care from their children and other family members. However this kind of support system nowadays faces severe challenges. The family support for the elderly has shown signs of weakening. Many of the families, because of poverty and economic conditions find it increasingly difficult to care for the older persons. These families are unlikely to be able to provide adequate economic support and care for their old parents. Therefore the percentage of older persons in Malaysia living in nursing homes has risen. However the elderly living in nursing homes are facing many daily problems. The findings from this study show that most of the elderly residents have their own problems. The study concludes that the involvement of the elderly residents in the counseling services is very important to help them learn his desired behavior regarding their feeling. Counseling service is proven important if we want to enhance the well-being of the elderly. These elderly residents need to have counseling services to cope with their daily problems. If the government aims to maintain the well-being of this older people, then the welfare department should therefore pay great attention to this service.

References

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