

**GERONTOLOGICAL PROBLEMS; IMPLICATIONS FOR
PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING MINISTRY**

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ABSTRACT

This research work focuses on the study of the aging problems (gerontological problems) and the Implications of those problems for those problems for pastoral care and counselling ministry. The aged encounter a lot of physical and health problems, emotional, socio-economic and spiritual problems. This study is therefore divided into five main chapters. The first chapter deals with the general introduction which also includes the statement of the problem, statement of purpose, researcher's interest in the subject, relevance of the study for a research, delimitations, research methodology and definition of key terms used in the essay.

Chapter two deals with the general understanding of Aging which involves the cultural understanding of aging, biological understanding and physical understanding. Chapter three of this study is centered on the Bible and Aging which delves into the study of aging in the Old Testament, understanding of aging in the New Testament, coupled with the theology of aging.

Chapter four contains a brief overview or examination of the gerontological problems. The second part of this same chapter deals with the ~~same~~ description of data, analysis of data and summary of the findings. Finally, the fifth chapter portrays the implications of those problems for pastoral care and counselling ministry. Some recommendations and suggestions are also made in this chapter.

B. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It has been established that the senior adults in our local churches as well as our entire society at large are undergoing series of socio-economic, emotional, spiritual, physical and health problems.

However, considering the use of pastoral care and counselling ministry as an instrument and as pastor's most indispensable weapon which is often used to heal people who are passing through series of alienation and crises, the pastoral counsellor and the church of God should wake up and be sensitive to their challenges and responsibilities. They should rise up to help bringing the quickest possible relief of internal and external symptoms of crises in old age through which they would be readjusted and functional. This researcher therefore hereby give the following recommendations:

²¹Coleman Lucien, "Understanding Today's Senior Adult," The Deacon, 21, April-June 1991, pp 6-8.

²²Gray. The church and the older person. pp. 146-147

- i. The pastoral counsellor should be spiritually inclined in order to be sensitive to the needs of every group in his local congregation among the aged are paramount.
- ii. Due to the growing needs of the pastoral counsellors in our churches, more emphasis should be given to the training of more pastoral counsellors in our theological institutions. In essence, this researcher is saying here that the study of pastoral counselling as a course should be made compulsory in all the departments of our theological seminary and its curriculum should be more embracing to include all areas of human life including the study of gerontology. Through this, all prospective pastors would be able to function effectively as counsellors.
- iii. Also, special programmes should be organized for the serving pastors on the study of gerontology especially during the Ministers' Conference. This will be of great benefit to the participants personally as an intending aged and also to their ministries as pastors in their various churches.
- iv. Counselling is generally regarded as one of the life wires of the church. Its central role in the church can be viewed through individual crisis counseling, family crisis counselling, and referral counselling. All these should be intensified and used appropriately by the pastoral counsellor towards alleviating the problems of the aged. Individual crises counselling should be adopted by the pastoral counsellor when dealing with the problems of the aged in the church. It helps to deal with the people passing through grief, in moment of divorce, sickness, bereavement, inability to cope with pressure,

- etc.²³ When individual counselling is used, it will enable the aged to undertake a kind of self exploration which invariably helps him to discover his potentials, his self efficacy and then acts in providing solutions to his problems.²⁴ Thus, the pastoral counsellor should always endeavour to deal with the problems of the aged individually.
- v. In most cases, the problems of the senior adults are varied. Therefore, the use of referral counselling is also essential in most cases. A wise referral is one of the most significant services a pastor can offer to a troubled parishioner or congregation and it is a means of using team's efforts to help a troubled person.²⁵ Therefore, pastors should not fail in their pastoral counselling to foster links with other agencies, professions and private practitioners to whom the problems of the aged in their churches could be referred to.
- vi. It is also important to note here that pastoral counsellors cannot be successful in his dealings with the aged without affectively using his listening skills. He should be able to listen with full attention to the verbal and non-verbal languages of the client.²⁶ The pastoral counsellor should also be able to use probing questions to get the needs of the aged and ability to grasp the facts from bundle of stories the senior adults always want to tell.²⁷

²³Howard Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Counselling (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 138.

²⁴D.A. Adeniran, Counselling practicum Lecture Notes (RCT 665), November 1999.

²⁵Clinebell, Basic Types of Pastoral Counselling, p.310.

²⁶Adeniran, lecture.

²⁷Adeniran

- vii. In counselling relationships with the aged there should be a warmth relationships that brings positive, loving care and nurture. ²⁸
- viii. Also, an important resources for pastoral care is presence. Pastoral presence according to wayne Oates, is a symbolic power of a pastor because anywhere a pastor goes, he is representing God because his presence is always felt whenever he is ²⁹
- ix. The pastoral counsellor and the church as a body have an inevitable roles to play in the life of the aged. Kerr Horace once emphasized the importance of the church in the life of an individual when he said that the church has an obligation to aid all persons whatever their age of development in order to achieve their fullest potentials as persons responsible to God and to their fellow man.³⁰ He emphasized further that in the context of this obligation, neglecting senior adults would be unthinkable because no matter the age, no one ever reaches the state of perfection and that, senior adults can continue to grow.³¹ On the basis of this, this researcher believes that the church and the pastor can also work together to minister effectively to the senior adults through which their various problems would be solved. Kerr mention five areas through which the church could minister to the problems of the aged such as spiritual ministrations, learning, socialization, service opportunities and services needed.³²

²⁸Adeniran.

²⁹Wayne Oates, The Presence of God in Pastoral Counselling, (Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1986), p.16.

³⁰Kerr L. Horace, How to Minister to Senior Adults in your church (Nashville: Convention Press, 1963) , p. 26.

³¹Kerr, p.26.

³²Kerr, pp 48-49.

