Case study : Barbara

Individual differences in surroundings, traditions, and relationships impact human development, which is not inherited by genes but instead constantly changing through lifespan (Osher et al., 2020). They had also stated that human development is the result of mutual interactions between individuals, their environments, or cultures, with interactions serving as the primary catalysts. In contrast, for a large number of people, things like social exclusion may exert a significant effect on the way they evolve, which can have a variety of cognitive, emotional and social repercussions. In the words of Dykxhoorn et al. (2023), social exclusion can be defined as a multifaceted notion, refers to situations that prevent individuals or communities from fully participating in society and are associated with deprivation, poverty, unemployed people, and a lack of social connections. Additionally, the absence of societal cohesiveness also gets referred to as social isolation and social exclusion at the same time. (Hossain et al., 2022). In the context of older adults, it is defined as a complex decline in resources, freedoms, and an interest in norms of society and pursuits as they grow older, having an influence upon their standard of life and the cohesiveness of society. From the case of Barbara, a seventy six years old woman, highlights the severe effects of social exclusion for people in their late adulthood, demonstrating the relationship between well-being and human development. For that reason, by looking into Barbara's hardships, cognitive, emotional, and social difficulties that people who encounter social exclusion in their elderly years must overcome can be comprehended. The discussion will also explore a combination of historical along with contemporary perspectives in order to improve knowledge about the effects of social exclusion and is critical for creating networks of support and strategies that effectively encourage healthy ageing and general well-being in older people who are experiencing a similar situation.

Cognitive effect

According to Murman (2015) as humans age, cognition becomes increasingly important for independent functioning, which includes activities such as living independently, handling money, taking medication, cautious driving, and efficient conversation, yet he believed that cognitive capacities normally decline with age. Burholt et al. (2019) believed that cognitive deterioration and impaired cognitive function are influenced by feelings of social exclusion. The factors that likely relate social exclusion to impaired cognition might

involve the damaging impact of an absence of interpersonal engagement in the brain, resulting in decreased cognitive decline, poorer resilience of the brain and cognitive reserve (Evans et al., 2018). Molden & Maxfield (2017), argued that the biggest concern elderly individuals experience with ageing is declining memory because the capacity to recall knowledge from earlier times tends to deteriorate throughout the latter stages of life. This increased memory issues could be a consequence of the dangers of social exclusion in older age, which are frequently characterised by a decrease in the variety and regularity of social interactions as an outcome of lost social ties (Read et al., 2020). As seen in the result from Read et al. study's, it shows women who faced increased social exclusion saw a more marked drop in memory, with every point gain on the social isolation scale translating into a 2.6-point decrease in memory scores during the next follow-up session. In relation to Barbara's story, a gradual memory loss may be caused by an absence of cognitive stimulation, like engaging in discussions and activities in her daily life.

Socioemotional selectivity theory (SST) by Carstensen (1993), is a life-span model of human motivation suggesting social objectives are shaped by projected future horizons, and age inequalities arise out of the relationship between chronological age and remaining life expectancy (Carstensen & Hershfield, 2021). Conceptually, SST contends that individuals explore less while exploit greater when they have limited "rounds" available to enjoy the rewards from their labours (Sang et al., 2020), same as Barbara who allocates her time and social energy more selectively to those who she cares the most like her son and grandchildren. Carstensen (2021), also highlighted that older people tend to prioritise emotional objectives over exploration, causing them to invest in meaningful activities sparingly and emphasise experiencing life to the fullest. This shows that poor memory retention may result from older persons experiencing social exclusion allocating less cognitive capacity to memorising new knowledge, particularly if it has no significance or relevance with their current social lives. Another perspective, the cognitive reserve theory by Stern (2009) agrees that mental stimulation is crucial for memory. However, the underlying mechanism of this theory differs as he proposed certain individuals can adjust to brain injuries more effectively because of individual differences within neural networks or cognitive functions that govern execution of tasks. The different experiences operate as a buffer towards the consequences of brain disease or impairment, enabling them to cope by activating compensation mechanisms and delaying the ageing process's natural decline in memory (Colombo et al., 2018). Evans et al. (2019), states such differences are explained by

factors which develop cognitive reserve over the course of a person's life, like engagement in mentally and socially stimulating activities. They mentioned maintaining a diverse social network and participating in social events on a regular basis can stimulate the mind via challenging and intricate connections to others, thus enhancing reserve, which can be seen in Barbara's previous lifestyle when she was working as a teacher because cognitive function can be maintained and plenty of chances for cognitive stimulation can be provided by the constantly changing and intellectually demanding character of education.

Emotional effect

The capacity to handle the changes that life brings is known as emotion regulation, and it is this ability that makes us resilient to life's hardships (Christopher & Facal, 2023). Carstensen et al. (2020), expressed that elderly individuals claim to feel more emotionally stable and in control of how they are feeling in everyday life in comparison to how they could when they were younger. Yet over the last twenty years, there is a surge of public acknowledgement and approval of the significance of loneliness and social exclusion for the overall health and welfare of elderly individuals (Newall & Menec, 2019). Roughly half of those over 60 are vulnerable to social isolation, and a quarter will feel lonely at some point in their later years (Fakoya et al., 2020). In the words of Perlman and Peplau (1981), loneliness is the perceived mismatch among a person's ideal and actual social relationships. It can be impacted by individual experiences and social conditions which have been linked to decreased well-being, problems with mental and physical health and even a higher probability of mortality (Dahlberg et al., 2022). Particularly, Burholt et al. (2019), suggest in a recently drawn up conceptual framework that feeling cut out of social interactions raises the likelihood of loneliness. Equally important, certain elements that elevate the likelihood of loneliness among older adults typically occur at the interpersonal or social levels (Dahlberg et al., 2022). In the case of Barbara's situation, there are high possibilities of loneliness which may be due to her being distant from her relatives, restricted chances for social interaction, and the loss of important relationships in her life.

Disengagement Theory by Comming and Henry (1961), identify that as people age, they gradually stop participating in social activities. People who were once actively involved subsequently became disengaged, ultimately leading to a rise in social disengagement and morbidity (Charles and Arockiam, 2024). Additionally, those who are starting to distance

themselves from society find it less difficult to deal with sadness and grief because they won't face the mourning experience as suddenly. (Comming and Henry, 1961). However, social exclusion experienced by elderly individuals is frequently intensified by the loss of a spouse (Ibrahim et al., 2021), similar to Barbara, who hasn't participated in her usual activities following her husband's death, perhaps out of pain and sadness. Therefore, most elderly suffer from higher levels of loneliness because of living alone, having less familial ties, and being less socially connected (Charles & Arockiam, 2024). While this theory believes that social disengagement is a normal part of ageing, Social Convoy Theory by Kahn and Antonucci (1980), stresses the value of preserving social ties to combat loneliness. They proposed, members of a community offer and obtain social support from peers, neighbours, relatives, or professional caregivers throughout their lives. A person's social convoy also shifts constantly due to situational and personal circumstances, illustrating the variety of social connections (Shin & Park, 2023). Moreover, an elderly person might depend on particular people of the convoy for personal help or immediate attention, while they may look to others for emotional support or connection (Fuller et al., 2020). For example, Barbara probably relied on her husband for company, so without him, she might feel lonely and isolated. Thus, this theory is useful in research focusing at reducing loneliness in older adults because it will assist in comprehending the composition of their social network, the form of support they obtain, and how satisfied they are with it (Fuller et al., 2020).

Social effect

Several social necessities typically rise during late adulthood including emotional assistance and more tangible support is needed because of declining physical and cognitive capabilities (Lee et al., 2020). Mehrabi and Béland (2020), described social support includes emotional support, contentment, unfavourable encounters, helpful assistance, constructive criticism, help with daily responsibilities, and general social assistance. Regardless of stress levels, social support directly improves the quality of life by raising the probability of social interaction and exposure to uplifting medical data (Henry et al., 2022). However, Dahlberg and McKeeolder (2016), found people who needed support but failed to obtain it via formal aid or relatives suffered more social exclusion than those who had care or were not in need of care. Not only that, older people who are socially excluded don't receive emotional or physical assistance, which has a negative impact on their mental wellness and worsens their standard of life (Hossain et al., 2022). Then again, relationship breakup and separation are

linked to less social contact, and widowhood might result in more social support from family members following a spouse's passing (Burholt et al., 2019). Even though Barbara should get all the support she deserves after the passing of her husband, her choice of distancing herself may prevent her from fully accessing the support networks available and contributing to a loss of social support over time.

Bowlby (1969) presented the attachment theory showing, securely attached youngsters seek proximity with their figures of attachment for consolation throughout moments of distress, use them as a sanctuary for support, and fearlessly investigate their environment in the knowledge that their career is present. For a while, interaction between parents and kids remained the main emphasis of attachment theory (Sutton, 2018). Yet, Morese and Palermo (2022) states, attachment issues can become substantial for older adults as an aftermath of ageing-related separation, loss, and fragility, emotions, health, and adaptation to illness and caregiving responsibilities. Moreover, in this theory, an individual's way of coping with relationships is influenced by their attachment style and can last a lifetime with secure attachment, being regarded as a protective factor for older adults (Momeni et al., 2022). If Barbara possessed a secure attachment style, marked by trust and comfort with intimacy, she may resiliently seek and maintain social connections instead of experiencing loss of social support from her community. In contrast to the attachment theory, social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1986), explores group membership rather than individual relationships where a person's level of identification to certain groups within a community is determined by what they perceive to be common cultural features or standards, such as principles, opinions, and actions. It also suggests our behaviour and self-definition are greatly influenced by the groups we are a part of (Jetten et al., 2018). Burholt et al. (2019) explained, following or opposing cultural standards according to one's social position can have comparable consequences to joining a marginalised cultural group, affecting engagement and social connections, and possibly lead from exclusion or discrimination. This is due to the fact that social identities that are generated from participation in groups can serve as a foundation for giving and receiving social assistance as well as aid in helping people acclimate to new circumstances (Jetten et al., 2018). In consequence, Barbara lost the support from her surroundings since she withdrew from them and it was proven that communal participation is essential to feeling supported and belonging

Interventions

In order to effectively navigate Barbara's complex position, specialised interventions are needed to combat the various repercussions of her social exclusion, such as memory decline, loneliness, and a lack of social support. First and foremost, memory decline can be improved with cognitive stimulation (CS) which are utilised as a general way to address memory problems in the elderly and a supplemental strategy to pharmacological therapies for Alzheimer's disease, usually undertaken in a group setting, with the goal of improving people's general cognitive and social functioning (Djabelkhir et al., 2017). They also found out that the participants from their research found both programmes to be extremely suitable and valued since they addressed their requirements for overcoming social exclusion and cognitive challenges. Moving on, facilitating one self to a regular social gathering or activities within a community can reduce the feeling of loneliness. O'Rourke et al. (2018), wrote, social engagement, or engaging in self-selected community-based activities that have the ability to connect individuals, such as volunteering, joining groups, or engaging in leisure pursuits, was explored as a tactic to avoid being lonely. Last but not least, Chen et al. (2023), volunteering is a successful wellness programme for older individuals since it can significantly enhance their health. It can also expand one's social circle and support system (Kim, 2019). The findings from Chen et al. (2023), showed that the desire for older persons to volunteer and the fulfilment of their expectations had a major effect upon their volunteer contentment where these factors had a 50.8% predictive value on satisfaction. Overall, a better well-being and satisfaction can result from these specialised interventions.

Conclusion

To wrap things up, Barbara's experience highlights the massive effect of social exclusion upon the cognitive, emotional, and social elements of human development in older adults. A comprehensive review of the cognitive, emotional and social effects regarding social exclusion reveals that interventions addressing memory decline, loneliness, and a lack of social support are critical to fostering a sense of well-being in older adults facing comparable obstacles. More importantly, Barbara and others experiencing social exclusion are able to handle the multifaceted consequences of their situation while enhancing their overall standard of life through the adoption of specialised interventions which include cognitive stimulation programmes, social engagement efforts, and volunteering opportunities. These approaches not only provide practical methods to reduce the negative impacts of social

exclusion, but they also emphasise the necessity of building networks of support and tactics that promote healthy ageing and wellness in older adults. Finally, by addressing the complicated relationship between social exclusion and development in humans, we may endeavour to create more open and nurturing environments in which older individuals can thrive.