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ECPS5004 INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ACROSS LIFESPAN

TOPIC: CASE STUDY OF BARBARA

Introduction

Social exclusion of older people has been defined that as individuals get older, they tend to experience a difficult process which encompasses the denial and lack of resources, the incapacity to take part in their usual daily activities and the ability to have interaction that are accessible to the majority of people throughout the various and multiple domains of society (Bulhort et al., 2019). The quality of life of older people, as well as the equality and cohesiveness of an ageing society as a whole, are both impacted on account of this societal phenomenon (Bulhort et al., 2019). Exclusion from social groups can have a negative impact on an individual's quality of life overall because it prevents them from participating in important social activities and interactions.

Elderly individuals are unlikely to disclose experiencing loneliness, and the actual number may be greater than what is officially stated (Petersen et al., 2020). With a growing percentage of older individuals living independently (Chen & While, 2019), the prevalence of loneliness among this demographic is likely to rise. Findings found that social exclusion arises from various deprivations and injustices that an individual may experience, including not only geographical and economic factors but also cultural influences and social dynamics (Petersen et al., 2020). Social exclusion, like social isolation, is a societal occurrence that stems from processes such as marginalisation, rejection, and isolation.

Barbara, in the sixties, used to be a joyful person enjoying her teaching experience in the local primary school. She and her husband used to fill their days with activities that she loved such as travelling around European countries and ballroom dancing. The passing of her husband had affected her emotionally and challenged her life experience at this age. She often felt emptiness and loneliness. Many of her former students and friends in the village had left,

adding to the emotional turbulence. Barbara illustrates the incumbrance of lonesomeness and sorrowness. These glitches may cause her to disengage from her surroundings. These problems require immediate attention before they worsen. Barbara needed to be facilitated to reduce the effect of these grieves.

Cognitive Effect

The term "cognitive ageing" is used to describe an instance in which a reduction in cognitive performance is noticeable as the result of good ageing processes. The process of cognitive ageing is generally accepted as a healthy and natural element of the ageing process (Wilson et al., 2020). Despite this, declines in cognitive performance that are critically important are not seen to be normal. The progression of cognitive decline in older persons differs from person to person. To accurately describe the changes in cognitive abilities during a person's lifetime, it is necessary to go beyond a basic combination of the two disciplines (Craik & Bialystok, 2006). Using language as an illustration, the acquisition of grammar and words progresses during childhood, with only minor declines related to age occurring after the age of 70. However, as one ages, difficulties may arise in retrieving information that has been saved, despite the fact that there is no decline in overall wisdom (Evans et al., 2019).

During the ageing process, there is a decline in cognitive functions such as how information is processed, learning ability, memory retrieval, ability to problem-solve, and quick thinking. Therefore, it is widely recognised that one of the most prevalent issues associated with the process of ageing is the deterioration of memory. Approximately 70% of senior citizens experience an innate feeling of memory deficiency (Briegas et al., 2020). However, their performance demonstrates significant enhancement if they are provided with cues that assist in retaining information. In relation to Barbara's situation, it was never

necessary for Barbara to acquire driving skills because her husband was the one who drove their vehicle. She relied solely on her husband. Due to the loss of her spouse, it had impacted Barbara's quality of life and dependency. Netuveli and Blane (2008) mentioned that growing older is a stage of life characterised by an increased likelihood of experiencing social disturbances such as loss of loved ones, exclusion from social interactions, physical challenges, and deterioration in cognitive abilities, all of which can contribute to the development of unhappiness.

Historically, while previous research, including (Hasher & Zacks, 1988) findings, generally supports the notion that older persons have diminished cognitive processing abilities, it is worth considering whether it is appropriate to heavily rely on these beliefs regarding decreasing capacity for cognitive ageing and other fields. These concerns pertain to the restricted capacity perspectives in general and how they can be applied to explanations of ageing-related modifications in cognitive function (Hasher & Zacks, 1988). A contemporary study by Rey-Mermet and Gade (2018) found that over the past three decades, numerous research studies have examined the idea of an inhibition deficiency in older individuals. Usually, this research involves comparing two age categories which consists of a younger group and an older group. Certain research studies have shown an age-related reduction in restriction, but others have not.

Social Effect

People are characterised by the societal environments in which they live. The development and performance of intellectual acts are significantly influenced by the significance of relevant social engagement (Costa-Cordella et al., 2021). In the early stages of our lives, the relationships that we possess have the ability to mould both ourselves and the

environment we are surrounded by. According to (Vila, 2021), family affection consists of several fundamental components, including attachment and caregiving, both of which are not only necessary for survivability during development and growth, but also for the mental and physical health of an individual across their entire life. There is a likelihood for life circumstances to entail more instances of losses than gains in social standing during the later stages of adulthood, which may be a factor contributing to the low self-esteem (Reitz, 2022). Low self-esteem has been identified by researchers as a significant factor in the development of depression (Blain & Crocker, 1993). A study examining depressive episodes in adolescents and senior citizens found that the basic mechanism causing depressive episodes in older individuals differs from that in younger adults. Depressions experienced by younger individuals are characterised as the internalisation of unconscious desires that are not accepted by the conscious mind. On the other hand, depression in the elderly is typically associated with a decline in self-worth. The majority of older individuals have been excluded from competitive environments where they could showcase their value and worth. Therefore, the emotions of inferiority and the initial stages of sadness that occur during this period of life are connected to both environmental and internal factors (Hunter et al., 1982).

Based on Barbara's situation, she lost her husband, her companion and most importantly her support system. The likelihood of older persons having long-term sickness or disability, living alone, and being widowed are all contributing causes for depression and low self-esteem (Boultan et al., 2021). According to research by Lim et al. (2020), depression and decreased self-esteem from others negatively affect a person's quality of life, wellness, and mental well-being and are associated with physical illness and death. A study conducted by researchers has found a correlation between the sensation of becoming lonely and disconnected and an increased risk of developing major health problems. These negative

impacts can have a negative impact on both mental and physical health (Tragantzopoulou & Giannouli, 2021).

A historical research by (Bradley, 1997), found that the psychosocial perspective of Erikson's lifespan development has been acknowledged as an important framework for determining individual advancement and growth. The developmental phases that an individual goes through in the way they relate to their social surroundings are described by Erikson's psychosocial model of development (Ahroni, 1996). This framework is a useful instrument for organising an individual's life experiences as it comprises basic stages that are characterised by specific key responsibilities. Developing a firm grasp of self-identity and a cohesive personality is what Erikson considers to be an indicator of positive ageing. Contemporary study stated that when people reach this stage, which typically occurs in later life, they analyse their lives and determine whether or not they have lived a life that has any significance. The development of ego integrity occurs in individuals who experience a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction (Darling-Fisher, 2018). Based on Barbara's circumstances, she craves for the sense of connection that existed in the small community, where she was acquainted with practically everyone and felt acknowledged by individuals who were constantly asking about her well-being. She currently experiences solitude and exclusion from the communal activities in the village.

Emotional Effect

According to (English & Growney, 2021), emotional states can be beneficial, yet there are also instances when they must be regulated due to their clash with reality standards or immediate objectives. The involvement of social companions is crucial in determining the regulation of our emotions and the efficacy of such actions. External individuals have the

ability to deliberately or inadvertently influence the way we feel, and we frequently rely on individuals as alternative ways of managing these feelings (English & Growney, 2021). Evans et al (2019) found that prior studies have examined the correlation between many elements of interpersonal interactions and cognitive ability, including social networks, feelings of loneliness or perceived detachment, social activity and involvement, marriage status, social networks, and social support.

The feeling of being alone can be described as the gap between social connections of the one that they actually have and the ones that they wished to have. Loneliness can arise as a consequence of social exclusion, however the concepts are distinct in that social exclusion involves the deliberate act of excluding someone by others (Tomova et al., 2019). We have presented evidence indicating that the experience of being socially excluded and feeling lonely is linked to unfavourable consequences during adolescence (Tomova et al., 2019). Research indicates that social connectedness is particularly crucial during adolescence, and that being socially excluded and experiencing loneliness can have significant negative impacts on mental well-being. Somes (2021) mentioned that those who report experiencing emotions of isolation or loneliness may exhibit heightened platelet aggregation, imbalance in the autonomic nervous system, high blood pressure, joint inflammation, depressive disorders, anxiety, and may have thoughts of suicide. In relation to Barbara's case study, the majority of her closest acquaintances are of the same age and have either a physical limitation or a lack of desire to travel long distances from where they live. Hence, Barbara slowly develops a sense of loneliness and slowly feels excluded from the society.

Loneliness, too, can result in one's decreased well-being. The elderly may experience a deterioration in their general well-being as a consequence of the emotional discomfort that

it causes as a result of social exclusion. Physiological health issues, such as elevated symptoms of stress, immune systems deficiencies, and a greater possibility of developing cardiovascular illnesses, might be an indication of social exclusion. According to the findings of several researchers, impairment is a common factor in the decrease of general health functions and various body parts in middle-aged and elderly individuals. This drop coincides with the early stages of a sequence that results in functional declines and an increased risk of medical conditions (Cheng & Chang, 2021). Barbara occasionally meets with a few elderly intimate acquaintances, but the frequency of these gatherings gradually decreases. In addition, Barbara's daily activities are limited to short trips to the grocery store and visits to the doctor, since she has little motivation to step out of the house. She occupies her time by taking care of her vegetable patch and reading. However, she has observed an increasing pattern of feeling fatigued and experiencing chills in the days, which frequently needs a sleep.

Historically, Bowlby and Ainsworth initially created the theory of attachment (Bretherton, 1992) by incorporating concepts from psychoanalysis and ethology (Goldberg, 1991). Bowlby's combination of cognitive representations into the attachment theory enables a comprehensive examination of the attachment behaviour system across the course of one's life (Goldberg, 1991). This approach facilitates a comprehension of how attachment expression evolves over time and continues to impact growth and behaviour in interpersonal interactions (Crowell & Treboux, 1995). However, in contemporary studies, empirical research provides evidence for the hypothesis of attachment theory, which states that human beings want closeness to feelings of attachment when they are experiencing emotional distress (Feeney & Collins, 2019). Adults tend to seek care more when they experience challenging or serious situations (Feeney & Collins, 2019). Recent study found that in recent years, researchers investigating ageing families have increasingly utilised or modified

attachment measures that not solely align with standard methods in growth-related and social psychology for studying individual differences in attachment, yet encompass several of Bowlby's key concepts related to attachment thoughts and patterns of behaviour (Karantzas et al., 2019).

An increasing number of people are coming to the realisation that a variety of issues related to society, the economy, and the environment have an effect on the well-being of individuals (Bild & Pachana, 2022). Xiang-Jing et al. (2022) stated that the World Health Organisation (WHO) acknowledges "engagement" as one of the three fundamental principles of active ageing. It emphasises the entitlement of elderly individuals to engage in several aspects of society, including the economics, culture, social matters, and more (Xiang-Jing et al., 2022). Another intervention that can be suggested based on Barbara's situation or for elderly people in general is to have home visitation programmes. Karlsson et al. (2019) found out that in Sweden, elderly individuals requiring in-home care have the option to request home assistance services from the local government. The support encompasses assistance with activities of daily living such as food preparation, running house errands, housekeeping, and personal hygiene. According to Schultz et al (2016), family members are the main caretaker of the elderly. In addition, for generations, they have been entrusted with the obligation to take care of the aged family members (Cassie & Sander, 2008). Since Barbara is now living alone and has been disengaged with her surroundings, such intermediation or help is necessary to ensure her physical and mental well-being.

Conclusion

In short, Barbara's story of her expedition into the phase offers a moving perception on the many concerns older persons in modern society confront. Barbara's tale sheds light on the many interactions that influence the realities of ageing, ranging from the severe effects of social exclusion and loneliness to the subtleties of cognitive decline and changing social dynamics. It is clear that fulfilling the requirements of senior citizens necessitates a comprehensive strategy that takes into account their practical, social, and emotional demands. A sense of association and belonging can be nurtured and the effects of social isolation can be lessened through interventions like home visitation programs and family support. Furthermore, the incorporation of attachment theory into therapies highlights the lifelong significance of intimate relationships and emotional support. We can improve the general well-being and quality of life of older people by identifying and meeting their emotional needs. It is critical that we support laws and programs that encourage inclusive communities and dynamic ageing as we negotiate the challenges of an elderly society. We can build a more just and caring society for people like Barbara as they begin the journey of ageing with dignity and resilience by promoting a culture of support, understanding and empathy.

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