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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/16690

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/16690>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONSULTING SERVICES FOR ELDERLY CARE FACILITIES IN HA NOI

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 15 February 2023

Final Accepted: 19 March 2023

Published: April 2023

Key words:-

Social Support Services, Counseling,
Elderly, Care Facilities For The Elderly

Abstract

Our country's aging population is rapidly increasing, leading to an increasing need for social support services, especially for the elderly in care facilities. Through surveys and research, consulting services for the elderly in both public and private care facilities were found to be important to them. This study analyzed the types of consulting services for the elderly living in care centers, including (1) health care and functional recovery counseling, (2) social assistance policy counseling, (3) psychological counseling for the elderly, and (4) psychological counseling for their families. the frequency of providing these services was found to be 50.0% or higher, indicating that they were all available but at an average frequency. 96.2% of social workers confirmed that the elderly in care centers received social assistance policy counseling, while only 54.8% of the elderly reported receiving psychological counseling for their families. the effectiveness of these services ranged from 2.08 to 3.1, which is higher than the average level (2.5-3.5).

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Introduction:-

According to the results of the general population and housing census in April 2019 by the General statistics office, there are about 11.4 million elderly people in VietNam. Accounting for approximately 11.86% of the population. to address the issue of an aging population, many countries around the world are facing numerous challenges. One solution to support the social security system is to establish community-based elderly care centers. Public and private centers are being established and developed in many places to support and care for the elderly.

According to circular 02/2018/TT-BLĐTBXH (dated April 27, 2018) on economic and technical norms regulations for the basis of pricing social assistance services and various social work services, especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, need to be developed. Therefore, this study evaluates and analyzes the types of counseling and consultation services for the elderly living in care centers today. the services are still provided to the elderly and their families by the centers. The purpose is (1) to provide comprehensive knowledge and information about the concerns of the elderly and their families; (2) to support psychological, mental, and social issues for the elderly and provide ways for family members to better care for them.

Research Methodology:-

A survey method using a questionnaire was used for two groups of participants: 186 elderly individuals living in care centers in Ha Noi and 232 social support staff who directly assist and care for the elderly in these centers.

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In-depth interviews were conducted with 45 participants, including elderly individuals living in care centers, social support staff who provide direct care to the elderly, center leaders, and family members of the elderly.

The research was conducted in four care centers, including two public centers (social protection center 2 and 3 in Ha Noi) and two private centers (Dien Hong elderly care center and Bach Nien Thien Duc elderly care center) fieldwork visits were made to eight facilities under these four centers.

Research Results:-

Types of Counseling and consultancy services counseling and consultancy services are essential, especially for the group of elderly people living in the center, including (1) health care and functional recovery counseling; (2) social support policy counseling; (3) individual psychological counseling; and (4) family psychological counseling for the elderly.

Health care and functional recovery counseling are provided directly at the center or the hospital. The elderly law also clearly states that the elderly must have regular health check-ups and treatment, be monitored and managed for their health, and be given priority when receiving medical care at health facilities. many elderly people over 80 years old have had to wait a long time to receive social support due to discrepancies in their date of birth between their identification cards and household registration books. Many elderly people over 80 have passed away without receiving the state's social welfare policies for health care.

Social support policy counseling provides information that the elderly and their families need and advises on the state's support policies and the center's general regulations, to help them choose services and costs that are suitable for each family's ability. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Labor, invalids, and social affairs (2017), there are over 9 million elderly people in the country, but only over 1.5 million receive monthly social welfare benefits; about 5% of elderly people over 80 years old have not received social welfare benefits as regulated. For elderly people living in social welfare centers, in addition to the state's policies for food, housing, transportation, and daily activities, which are covered under decree No.136 of the government, now amended by decree No.20/2021/NĐ-CP on social support policies for social welfare beneficiaries, and resolution No.09/2021/NQ-HĐND dated September 23, 2021, of the people's council on regulating the standard level of social welfare and the beneficiaries of social welfare in Ha Noi, the living expenses for the elderly are 1,760,000 VND/person and 350,000 VND for other expenses (including medicines, clothing, bedding, etc.).

Psychological counseling services for individuals. older adults not only experience physical health problems but can also face many psychological issues due to the sense of loss when changing environments, neglect, and feelings of abandonment, long-term helplessness, which can accumulate into pathological problems that cannot be solved simply through sharing. Therefore, the elderly need more specialized psychological services to address these issues.

Psychological counseling services for elderly families. most elderly in VietNam choose to rely on their children when they grow old. Many elderly are placed in care facilities, but children and relatives remain the main psychological support and care cost for them. therefore, caregivers at the center also need to choose psychological counseling for the elderly's loved ones/families. The goal is to provide psychological support for family members as well as to increase knowledge and information for better care of the elderly.

Frequency of providing counseling and advisory services To evaluate the frequency of different types of counseling and advisory services provided by elderly care facilities, a survey was conducted to gather the opinions of both elderly beneficiaries and social work staff who directly provide these services. The survey used a scale of regularly, occasionally, and not provided to assess the frequency of each type of service.

No	Consult	Frequency (from the perspective of the elderly)						Frequency (from the perspective of a social counselor)					
		frequent		sometimes		not provided		frequent		sometimes		not provided	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	Counseling on care, health examination, and	102	44,0	109	47,0	21	9,1	124	66,7	42	22,6	20	10,8

	rehabilitation (directly at the facility or at the hospital)												
2	Social assistance policy consultation	99	42,7	115	49,6	18	7,8	90	48,4	89	47,8	7	3,8
3	Psychological counseling for the elderly	39	16,8	100	43,1	93	40,1	87	46,8	42	22,6	57	30,6
4	Psychological counseling for elderly families	34	14,7	93	40,1	105	45,3	67	36,0	92	49,5	27	14,5

Frequency levels:**Regular:**

Services that are part of employees' daily tasks carried out on average at least 3 times per week.

Occasional:

Services provided by employees when the elderly and their families have a need, carried out on average once every 2 weeks.

Not provided:

Services that have not been provided by employees at the center source: survey data from the project.

According to the data table, the highest regularly performed service is health care consultation and examination, chosen by 102 elderly individuals (44.0%). Additionally, when an elderly person is hospitalized, the social work staff also collaborates with medical personnel at the hospital and the family members/caregivers of the elderly person to monitor, support care, and facilitate functional recovery. The social work staff gathers information on the elderly person's medical condition, treatment protocol, and disease progression so that when the elderly person returns to the center, the staff can continue to monitor and support them.

According to a staff member at Dien Hong nursing home center: "In our center, we provide weekly health checkups for the elderly, usually on a fixed day of the week. Our center's doctor provides treatment for common diseases at the center. For more severe diseases or when our center lacks the necessary equipment, we will refer the elderly person to the hospital" (deep interview, male, deputy director of Dien Hong Center).

In addition, 99 elderly individuals (42.7%) were regularly consulted on assistance policies, and 115 individuals (49.6%) were occasionally consulted.

Personal counseling services for elderly individuals are mainly provided on an "occasional" basis. Counseling activities with individual elderly individuals account for 100 (43.1%), while counseling activities with family members of elderly individuals account for 93 (40.1%). This assessment is quite appropriate. In addition to physical needs, elderly individuals also have psychological and social needs that are unique to their age group. Each person's psychological changes and feelings of loneliness and desire for more attention and care are different.

Another sharing from an elderly person at the social protection center: "I've been living here for 4 months, and I miss home so much. Sometimes I want to talk and confide in the social workers, but they are too busy, and the other elderly people around me are deaf and cannot communicate. It's hard to talk to them..."

Counseling service for the elderly and their families is one of the most in-demand services. During their stay at the center, the elderly may encounter problems such as not understanding policies, service fees, and disagreements in service agreements, which lead to complaints about services to their families and relatives. This sometimes leads to conflicts with the staff at the center. Therefore, timely counseling from social workers is essential to resolve these issues. However, during the implementation at the centers, psychological counseling services for the elderly and their families are mainly carried out with a frequency of "occasional" or "infrequent" for 93 people (40.1%) and 105 people (45.3%), respectively.

The difference between public and private centers in the types of services provided

The survey results showed that the frequency of providing counseling services for elderly care, health examination, and functional rehabilitation directly at the center or hospital, and social policy consultation at public centers was higher than private centers with rates of 54.8% and 60.7% respectively, while private centers were at 37.8% and 32.4%. This also reflects the reality of the elderly and the nature of providing services in public centers, where the elderly are covered by social policies, thus the demand for social policy consultation is higher, and the provision of counseling and health examination services is also regularly performed according to regulations.

For psychological counseling services for the elderly and their families at public centers, the frequency is only 10.7%, while private centers have rates of 20.3% and 16.9% occasionally, and between 30 to 60% for both types of centers. Therefore, the average frequency of regular and occasional services for these types of services is only around 30 to 35%, which is a modest number. The rates of counseling and consultation services that are not carried out are also higher.

According to the center's leadership: "our center currently takes care of a large number of elderly people, but the number of staff is limited, especially those specializing in social work. The main activities currently carried out are care, nurturing, and functional rehabilitation. counseling and psychological consultation for individuals and families of the elderly are also limited due to professional factors and time constraints. this is an issue that we will consider improving in the future" (deep interview, male, center leader). "Our center places a great emphasis on the psychological well-being of the elderly. Whenever they have a need, we send staff members to provide support and counseling as soon as possible, as there are often many elderly individuals and few social work staff members, making it difficult to meet everyone's needs" (Deep interview leader, 36-year-old female, social work department). "For public centers, meeting the demand for psychological counseling and consultation for the elderly is quite limited due to a large number of clients, including children, people with disabilities, and the elderly, so staff members do not have enough time to care for and support the elderly promptly..." (deep interview leader, male, social welfare department 2).

Evaluation of the effectiveness of counseling services The study explores the effectiveness of the services provided based on the assessment of the elderly and social work staff members.

The deep interview results showed that the majority of the limitations in effectiveness were due to the busy work schedule and limited expertise of the service providers. "At the center, I also receive counseling when I have psychological difficulties, but not regularly and the effect is not as high as expected, partly because of the shortage of staff and partly because of the limited expertise in psychology. Counseling the elderly also has many difficulties, as my colleague said, it is difficult to be professionally executed at the center because of the shortage of personnel, most of whom have to do multiple tasks, and there are few experts in social work" (deep interview, female, 68 years old). Overall, the effectiveness of counseling services was not highly rated by both social workers and the elderly, mainly due to the impact of mechanisms, policies, and limitations in the capacity of service providers.

Discussion:-

To better meet the needs and improve the quality of social support services for the elderly, especially counseling services, care centers need to consider many aspects as well as advantages and limitations to develop these services. Some difficulties in providing services (the content of the opinions we surveyed was recorded and the survey table was kept). Ms. NN.B. 74 years old, social welfare center, said: "Sometimes see that when there are conflicts among the elderly in the room, the staff come to provide additional counseling and resolve the integration for the elderly living here. At the elderly age, each person has their own opinion, and sometimes can't sleep because Mrs. N keeps arguing at night. Many things like that, sometimes there are also quarrels and tension. Therefore, psychological counseling is very necessary for the elderly to integrate.."

On another aspect: she "chose to live at the center herself. Her children and grandchildren took her to many places, but she did not like it. She feels that the atmosphere here is clean and cool. She is not afraid of people talking about her. It is a comfortable place to live."

Conclusion:-

Increased lifespan is one of the achievements of humanity. However, population aging is occurring at a fast pace, particularly in developing countries such as VietNam, posing significant challenges for the community and society.

Vietnam has been developing a community-based social support system for the elderly as an effective solution for caring for the elderly. Circular 02/2018/TT-BLĐTBXH (dated 27/4/2018) affirms that the social support system for the elderly needs to be further improved and developed, including counseling and consultation services. These services aim to provide information and psychological support and stabilize the lives of the elderly living in current care facilities. The common frequency of counseling and consultation services is at a moderate level of 50%. However, in the coming time, care facilities for the elderly need to develop these services to enhance the quality of care and stabilize the lives of the elderly.

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