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## **Problems and Counselling Needs of Corps Members in Nigeria** (Pp. 500-513)

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to find out the problems and counseling needs of corps members. The main instrument that was used to collect relevant data was a questionnaire titled “Problems and Counseling Needs of Corps Members Questionnaire” (PCNCMQ). A total number of one hundred Corps members were selected using simple random sampling. It was found that the major problems and counseling needs of Corps Members were psychological in nature. It was then specifically recommended that National Youth Service Corps Scheme should established functional and dynamic Counseling Units in all the state Secretariats and the Federal Capital Territory.*

### **Introduction**

Law established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1973 to mobilize Nigeria youths for nation building and to prepare them for patriotic and loyal service to their fatherland. The age range of the participants in the scheme is between 18 and 30 years (Momoh, 2004). Corps members, being the prime of Nigerian Youths, are mainly those who have graduated from universities in or outside Nigeria and those who have obtained the Higher Diploma (HND) from polytechnics or other recognized higher institution in Nigeria. Popoola (2004) stated that Nigeria stands as the most populous nation in African and it is believed to give home to more than 127 million people, with her youths ranging from 15 to 24 years age, making up more than forty percent of this ever growing population. Popoola also

noted that for every nation the bulk of the workforce is made up of young people, and Nigerian is no exception. Hence, for any meaningful development to take place in any nation, young adult must be-recognized and given their rightful place.

The definition of “Youth “and the age range of people who fall into his discrete category has been a very controversial issue in the literature (Greenwood 1992; Roundtree, Grenier and Hoffman 1993). Place this population at age 15 to 18 years while Orcutt (1984) and Warrs (1993) believe that only people age 18 to 21 years fall into this population. The controversy in literature notwithstanding, the general consensus among most researchers about the age bracket of youth seem to lie between 14 and 18 years (Iso-Ahoha & Crowley, 1991; Slides, 1992).

Youth Corps members based on the foregoing can therefore be regarded as young adults in their early adulthood stage which also falls within the sixth stage of Erikson’s eight life psychological stages. Erikson identified two tasks of this stage (adulthood) to be intimacy and generativity. While Freud identified the needs of adulthood work, Abraham Maslow (1968,1970) described the needs of this period of life as love and belonging, which, when satisfied develop into the needs for success and esteem.

Levinson (1986) sees the period of adulthood as the period to take on the challenges of career, marriage and parenthood. The shared care of these theories is that adulthood is a time in which both social relationship and personal accomplishments take on special priority.

Erikson (1963) observed that each individual must successfully pass through a series of psychological phases, each of which is characterized by problems. At each stage, a particular crisis comes into focus, which never disappears and must be resolved sufficiently at a given stage if the individual is to cope successfully with conflicts at later stages. Partial resolution of different problems faced by the youth corps members during their service year may be responsible for the social vices that the country is witnessing (Nigeria). Among the social vices plaguing the country in which graduates (most youths) involved are drug trafficking, drug abuse, armed robbery, political thugery and violence among youth.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992) added that there is an increase in number of youth who engage in risky behaviour; poverty, environment degradation, unemployment, illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, violence and crime are the myriads of problems that the African youth contend with. This position is buttressed by Gerler, ciehalski, and Paker's (1990) view that today's youth are growing up in world characterized by changing family structures, AIDS, rampant substances abuse, teenage pregnancy, family and societal violence, cultural diversity, alternative lifestyle, homelessness etc. The social vices perpetuated by the Nigeria youth are source of concern to parent counselors, the government, and society at large because youths are the leaders of tomorrow and if they are not living a life of fulfillment, the future of Nigeria is shaky. In addition, the roles of peace keeping, economic development, maintenance of good governance in West Africa sub-region and entire African countries, which Nigeria is playing an important role, will also be seriously affected. Worrisome as this situation is there is needed to find solution to problems faced by youth.

To the best of the research knowledge, most previous researcher has not focused on this category of individuals (Youth) who are entering into early adulthood with lot of challenges facing them; Corps members fall within this category. For instance, the researchers only focus on the scheme (National Youth Service Corps) achievement. Researchers like Eneghwa (2000) carried out research on the achievement of the scheme, while Quardir (2001) worked on how the scheme can generate internal revenue. None of this study focused on the Youth Corps member. Whereas, youth problems cannot be solved easily and successfully without the use of effective counseling interventions beginning with assessment of their needs and problems. This study is therefore designed to provide baseline data needed by counselors and other helping professionals to formulate intervention strategies for this category of "special clients". That is the reason why this researcher seeks to find out problems and counseling needs of the youth corps members; more so that they (corps members) represent the future leadership pool in the youth segment of the nation population.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The problems & counseling needs of Corps Members, which is the focus of this paper, is well grounded in Erick Erikson theory of developmental stages of human life. Erick Erikson (1963) built on Freud's ideas and extended his theory by stressing the psychosocial aspects of development Erickson

theories of development stage of human being beyond early childhood. Erickson's theory of development holds that psychosexual and psychosocial growth takes places together. He described development in terms of the entire life span, divided by specific crises to be resolved. Erickson divided human life span into eight psychological stages as presented in table 1.

### **Levinson classification of Adulthood**

Levinson classified transition to early adulthood as beginning sometime between the ages of 17 and 22. For most individuals, early adulthood consists of three brief stage; (i) the entry to early adulthood lasts until approximately age 28; (ii) The age 30 transition period (28-33) is a time of re-evaluating one's start into adult life; and (iii) the culmination of early adulthood is a time of working hard towards one's goals. In general, the stage of early adulthood is a demanding one. The expectations are high, and the young adult often takes on the challenges of career, marriage and parenthood this period.

By the classification of Erikson and Levison, corps members fall with the stage of early adulthood because most of them graduate in their twenties and are able to meet the cut-off age limit of 30 stipulated for Nation service. The vast majority of the youth corps members' exhibit behaviour traits similar to those of adolescent, as specified by theories of Erickson and Levison.

### **Research Questions**

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- (i) What are the major problems and counselling needs of corps members serving in Osun State?
- (ii) Is there any difference between the problems of male and female corps members?
- (iii) Is there any significant difference between the counselling need of male and female youth Corps members?
- (iv) Is there any significant difference between the problems of youth corps member of different age group?
- (v) Is there any significant difference between the counselling needs of youth corps member of different age groups?

## **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study is the survey research type. Survey research design enables a research to obtain necessary information on the variables from a representing sample of the population in order to describe situations, as they exist. Simple random sample technique was employed to select the sample for the study. The sample consisted of 100 corps members from a population of 1,500 youth corps members in Osun State during the 2007/08-service year.

The instrument used to obtain relevant data for this study is a questionnaire titled "Problems and Counselling Needs of Corps Members" (PCNCM). The researcher developed it after a careful review of relevant literature.

The questionnaires contain 50 items designed to find out problems and Counseling Needs of Corps Members. It was grouped into four sections. Section A contains items on personal data; section B deals with problems of corps members respondents are required to indicate their preferences using it is True of Me (TM); sometimes True of Me (STM); Not True of Me (NTM); section C deals with the counseling needs of corps members and they are expected to tick (-) Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) or strongly Disagree (SD); section d is for free responses where corps members are expected to make statements to specific questions raised

Content validity was used for validating the PCNCM. In order to establish the validity of this measure, the instrument was given to five experts in the department of Guidance and Counseling and based on their comments; some items were modified while some were removed. In the final form of the instrument, they all agreed that it covered the domain of interest.

The reliability of PCNCM was established with the use of the test-retest reliability procedure. The instrument was administered twice to 40 randomly selected corps members, who are not part of the study, with an interval of four weeks. The two scores from the sample were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Formula. A correlation co-efficient of 0.74 was obtained. This co-efficient was adjudged high enough for the instrument to be used for this study.

The data collected were analyzed using the following statistical methods:-

1. Analysis and Variance (ANOVA)
2. The t-test Statistics

## **Results**

This section presents the results of the analysis of data that were collected from the investigation based on the questions raised for the study.

Table 2 shows that psychological problem is the major problem affecting corps members, followed by financial problem, religious and social problems, health problem ranked fifth.

Table 3 shows the major counseling needs of corps members are psychological needs followed by health needs. Financial need is the least among other needs.

The result on table 4 indicates that the calculated t-value of 1.01 is less than the critical t-value of 2.00, therefore, there is no significant difference in the problems of male and female youth corps. That is corps members are not different in the problems encountered.

It can be seen from table 5 that the calculated t-value of 0.25 is lower than critical t-value of 2.00. The findings of the study show that both male and female corps members are not different in their counseling needs.

The result on table 6 indicates that youth corps members of different age groups have similar problems. This is because the calculated t-value of 0.40 is less than the critical t-value of 2.37.

The result on table 7 shows that critical F-value at 99 degree of freedom (df) at 0.05 level of significance is 2.37 while the calculated F-value is 0.39. This implies that there is no significant difference in the counseling needs of corps members of different age groups.

## **Discussion**

The result of this study is clearly indicative that major problems and counseling needs of corps members are psychological such as: finding it difficult leaving their parents; needs to overcome fear of unknown after service. The findings confirmed that as young person experience much growth and joy; they also encounter doubt and confusion. Any life transition holds the potential for danger and growth (Krupp, 1987). The corps members' psychological problems may be due to the fact that they are in the

period that Levinson (1986) refers to as period of entry into early adulthood (i.e. age 28 to 33).

The study has revealed that there are no significant difference in the problem and counseling needs of male and female corps members. This shows that, irrespective of their sex, corps members have similar problems and related counselling need. The finding are in support of the views of Helson and Moane (1987) and Stewart and Ostrove (1998), that gender differences in personality become muted over time, women become more assertive, confident, and independent and men become more aware of their aesthetic needs and their need for affection.

The findings of the study also revealed no difference in the problems and counseling needs of corps member of different age group. The findings are consistent with that of Schulz and Ewen (1988) who revealed that no declines occur before about 75 years in such fundamental aspect of intelligence as the ability to reason about everyday problems, and understanding mathematical concepts or to learn and remember meaningful information. The findings also support the view of Corenlus and Caspill, (1987). Steinberg (1995) and Kaufman & others (1996) also observed that small but steady improvement occur from the 20s to the observed that components of crystallized intelligence, such as knowledge of facts and word meanings. The finding, therefore, implies that the corps members understand the concepts of the questionnaire and respond to it appropriately.

### **Implications of the Findings for Counseling Practice**

The major implication of this finding is that youth corps members are having both psychological problems and counseling needs, and counseling is one potent and effective means to solve their problems. Youth are faced with different tasks that can give them psychological problems varying from social, health, financial, and threats from society. Therefore, the youth need counseling in order to be able to cope with this situation of life.

Although, there is a counseling and Job Advisory Unit within the Inspectorate Department at the Youth Service Corps, Headquarters, Abuja, its present structure cannot take care of corps members' psychological problems. It is just a unit without a counselor; and not even replicated in any of the 36 state and federal capital territory secretariats, where these corps members could have direct access to the benefits of counseling services.

There is thus a dire need for fundamental restructuring and re-engineering towards professionalism that will ensure a major overhauling of the Guidance and Counseling Department at the National Youth Service Corps Directorate Headquarters, to be expanded to all state secretariats. The counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should, as a matter of urgency, take up the challenge and send out proposals to the Director-General of NYSC on the need for a dynamic Counselling Department that is more relevant to contemporary and future needs of youth corps members in Nigeria's harsh socio-economic environment. The need to employ professional counselors to man these offices should be vigorously pursued.

Counselors can attend the psychological problems of the corps members to adequate so that after the service year they can function well in the society. The issue of unemployment that has always overwhelmed youth corps members should be properly addressed and taken care of in a more professionalized way. Although lecturers from the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) usually give talks on small-scale businesses during the orientation period, its effect on the Corpers at the end of service year is usually not felt. Although a few corps members succeed in getting loans for small-scale businesses, majority of them do not know how to invest and manage the businesses. If there were professional counselors in the scheme, they would be able to give the corps members proper vocational guidance based on their aptitudes, interests and competence for effective investment. Such counselors will be able to give follow-up services to corps members after camp, from where they (corps members) can become job creators.

Counseling as a continuous process should start from secondary schools. Therefore, counselors in secondary schools should always provide effective counseling services to the adolescent in secondary schools in the area of vocational needs (career), starting from choice of subjects and placement after junior secondary schools examination, social needs, health and other areas of need. Since counseling requires follow-up, departments of Guidance and Counseling in all University in Nigeria should establish counseling centers to be able to take care of the counselling needs of their students. Many university students go about with various problems that are unattended to which often lead them into various anti-social behaviours, such as examination malpractices, cultism, and other vices. Some university students are known to offer courses that they are not interested in but accepted it because they are desperately anxious to secure admission. On getting to



school, they encounter problems and hence may be misbehaving. All these can be taken care of by the counseling centers if established in the universities and expanded to other higher institutions through the help of Federal and the state Government. If problems of the students of tertiary institutions are properly taken care of they may not be carried on to the service year or even thereafter.

The counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) has a role to play here. It should make stronger move for functioning counseling centers in secondary schools, establishment of functioning counseling centers in all state secretariats of the National Youth Service Corps. This will go a long way to help the society at large because it will make our youths to become more responsible, focused, productive and patriotic oriented.

### **Conclusion**

Just as changes (physical, cognitive and socio- emotional) take place in the child and adolescent, so also do changes occur in adult years? This paper has examined changes bordering on problems and counseling needs of the early adulthood stage as typified in Nigeria Youth Corps Members.

The results of this study have revealed that corps members have problems and counseling needs. The problems as revealed by the questionnaire in hierarchy of importance are psychological, health, social, religion and financial. The widespread problems and counseling needs of youth corps members as revealed by this study could be apparently due to total lack or grossly inadequate guidance and counseling service in the tertiary institutions and the seeming levity with which National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has taken Guidance and Counseling Services.

The Counseling Association of Nigeria and Youth Service Corps Scheme not leave to chance, the issue of dealing with the problems, frustration and needs of these youth corps members who are the vanguard of greater Nigeria. Youth corps members are in the early adulthood stage and are thus more concerned with productive engagement and upward socio-economic mobility for better expression of self- actualization.

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**Table 1: Erikson’s Eight life psychological stages of life**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Stage of life</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
One	Infant	Trust versus mistrust	To develop a sense of trust to oneself, and the others
Two	Early childhood	Autonomy versus shame and doubt	To develop sense of autonomy
Three	The preschool age	Initiative versus Guilt	To establish a sense of competence and initiative
Four	The School age	Industry versus inferiority	To achieve a sense of industry
Five	Adolescence	Identity versus identity diffusion	To develop a personal identity
Six	Young Adulthood	Intimacy versus isolation	Ability to form intimate relationship and to have confidence in one’s ability
Seven	Middle Age	Generality versus self-Absorption or stagnation	To develop a sense of creating through a career, family,leisure-time activities.
Eight	Later life	Integrity versus despair	Ability to live productive and worthwhile lives

**Table 2: Mean Scores and Rankings of Problems among Youth Corps Members**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Psychological	9.1	1 <sup>st</sup>
Financial	8.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Religious	8.1	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Social	6.3	4 <sup>th</sup>
Health	5.4	5 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 3: Mean Scores and Rankings of Counseling needs of Youth Corps Members.**

<b>Counseling needs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Psychological	18.2	1 <sup>st+</sup>
Financial	17.7	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Religious	16.2	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Social	14.9	4 <sup>th</sup>
Health	12.9	5 <sup>th</sup>

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and t-value of problems of male and female youth corps members

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Male	39	38.5385	8.3504	98	1.01	2.00 (NS)
Female	61	37.0328	6.5624			

NS= Not Significance at 0.05 level.

Table 5: Means, Standard Deviation and t-value of Counseling needs of male and female corps members.

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Male	39	78.6154	12.0276	98	-0.25 (NS)	2.00
Female	61	79.1803	10.6701			

NB: NS = Not Significant at 0.05 Level

Table 6: ANOVA Summary Table Showing the results of differences in the problems of youth corps members of different age groups

Source	Df	Sum of square	Means square	Cal f-value	Critical f-value
Model	3	65.812	21.937	40 (NS)	2.37
Error corrected	96	5221.748	54.393		
Total	99	5287.560			

NB: NS= Not Significant at 0.05 level

Table 7: ANOVA Summary Table showing the results of difference in the counseling needs of youth corps members of different age groups

Source	Df	Sum of square	Means square	Cal f-value	Critical f-value
Model	3	149.603	49.868		
Error corrected	96	12186.237	126.940	0.39 (NS)	2.37
Total	99	12335.840			

NS=Not Significant at 0.05 level.