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## Relationship between Guidance and Counseling Services and Socio-Economic Status and Psychological Status of Former Public Servants Residing in Vihiga County, Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Pension is paid to former workers residing in Vihiga County to help them transit safely into retirement. In spite of this, a number of these retirees still find difficulties with far reaching negative social ramification. As a result of these problems, different measures have been introduced to mitigate the situation. For instance adjustment upwards of retirement age, removal of mandatory retirement age or introduction of new forms of pension. Despite the measures, retirees have continued to suffer. This study, therefore, intended to determine if there exists any relationship between guidance and counseling services and socioeconomic status and psychological status of the retirees. The study was guided jointly by three theories, namely, social disengagement theory, activity theory and continuity theory. A descriptive ex-post facto survey research design was used to conduct the study in Vihiga County Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select a total sample of 198 participants from a population of 958 former public servants. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Mathematical techniques that comprised percentiles, and chi square with the help of SPSS version 17 were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study showed that there was a relationship between guidance and counseling services received and the socioeconomic and psychological status of retirees. Thus the study recommended that there is a need to establish formal guidance and counselling services to prepare former workers with skills that will help them face socioeconomic hardships that occasion psychological problems.*

**Keywords:** Retirement, Guidance, counseling, socioeconomic, psychological

### **1. Introduction**

Retirees blame statutory retirement age for problems they face in retirement, arguing it is somewhat arbitrarily determined because it does not take into consideration their individual professional needs, characteristics or training. But this argument is unable to discount that most functions relevant to work performance do decline with age (Fillenbaum, 1971). This is despite Zacks, Hasher and Li, (2000) indicating that some functions of the aging workers have potential to grow. But the capacity for some of these functions to grow is linked to diet. This is because diet improves calorific restrictions substantially causing gene expression changes and eventually affecting systems responsible for maintenance, repair and defense response mechanisms. This implies that statutory retirement age should be based on the life patterns of a worker. This is because the occupational performance of a worker depends on whether life patterns of a worker increases or reduces the intermolecular heterogeneity thereby affecting homodynamic space hence the rate of aging. But the danger with such kind of flexible determination of retirement age is that it can easily be abused.

However, retirees major problems revolve around the significant differences in income between previous salary and current pension. It is this substantial difference in economic capacity that exposes retirees to new found inability to take care of their immediate families or themselves when in need of health care services or generally their family commitments. As a result, retirees' level of enjoyment of life is affected, hence the social rating consequently denying them influence in society. This ultimately shields them from coming directly in touch with social and interpersonal problems. As a response, retirees seclude themselves from system of opportunities and rewards that other people participate in such as 'harambees' or weddings. But the impact of this seclusion that separates retirees from engagements end up puncturing their ego. This affects their feelings of value, worth, self concept and personal identity. It is for this reason that Giddens (1998) compares retirement to a form of exclusive welfare dependency, created by societies to separate older people from the majority into a 'retirement ghetto' where they get emotionally confined.

Seclusion is not necessary a problem, but the problem is when retirees become aware of absence of meaningful integration with or exclusion from system of opportunities and rewards in which other people participate in. This is because of the complex manner in which this awareness of stagnation, failure in alertness, interest and loss of mental and physical skills through disuse finally occasion drop in the retirees levels of activity, engagement, feelings of satisfaction, contentment and happiness: one after the other. It is for this reason that retirees find it difficult to conform to this role that excludes them from equal opportunities for social participation and rewards (Rosow, 1974).

That is why, either as a result of outright rejection of retirement or as a result of reduced income and hence loss of social world, the psychological characteristics of retirees is affected. This is a major concern because changes in psychological characteristics do trigger psychosomatic (mind/body) illnesses. For example if a retiree displays an attitude of hopelessness according to (Jarvis, 1965) it will lead to intellectual decline, while display of inactivity that is coupled with malnutrition will lead to declining functions and hence affect self image and ultimately occasioning depression. But this concern solely depends on the retirees psychological disposition as it dictates the way they will respond to these life stressors. For instance, retirees disposed with optimism will make good recovery from heart attack whereas those prone to depression or passivity and dependency will react in a completely different way, sometimes becoming hypochondria cal.

It is for this reason that George and Cristiani (1990) emphasized need for preparation of workers in order to minimize the importance of declining work performance capacities before retirement so that they can fit into public life. This preparation is necessary because major problem of aging workers is not necessarily in job performance changes but lack of psychologically preparedness on how to deal with issues that may include re-entering new work force or new life and how to deal with relocations, employers' ageist attitude, terminal illness, sexuality, widowhood, isolation or chronic health problems. But since there are no new principles of perception, learning, motivation or thinking which have any unique relevance to the aging worker as compared to a young worker this preparation can only be done through counseling sessions. In fact Ngaru (2008) encourages that this preparation should start well before a worker retires, for a winning retirement life, just as was done at one point in Kenya during the retrenchment period of between 1993-1998 (RoK, 1996).

The advantage of guidance and counseling is that it can produce continuity in inner psychological characteristics, as well as, in social behavior of a retiree. This is because guidance and counseling broadens the world view of retirees enabling them to psychologically resist shrinkage of their social world and at same time overcome their vulnerability in form of transition and role losses (Glass & Grant, 1983). This capacity to equip workers with skills will not only open door of adaptation to external pressures but to exploit personal abilities that will help them influence their future choices (Morris & Forrest, 1970). It is only through this process that retirees can develop substitute skills to activities they will relinquish, or new skills in form of job redesign that they will take, so that they can continue with similar or new activities (Stagner, 1971).

Loss of employment, economic power, and separation of relationships involves a grieving process that occasion a complex of emotional responses (Cheikin, 1981). Major concern is that some of retiree's emotional responses to this life stressors can trigger psychosomatic illnesses that ultimately occasion death to some of them. That is why it is worrying that despite several government efforts to secure their situation a number of retirees have died soon after retirement. This study therefore intended to determine if there exists a relationship between guidance and counseling services and socioeconomic and psychological status of retirees. The findings of the study are intended to assist stakeholders have a better understanding and perception of the situation of retirees and to use the information to pressurize improvement of public service retirement program by incorporating guidance and counseling.

## 2. Research Methodology

The research employed a descriptive *ex post facto* survey research design. This research was carried out in four administrative districts of Vihiga County. A sample of 198 participants was sampled using proportionate stratified random sampling technique from a population of 958 public servant retirees. This sample consisted of 150 male retirees and 48 female retirees. One set of instrument comprising of questionnaire having items based on three Likert scale rating was used in the study. This set had three main sections: the first section was to collect data on socio economic status of retirees, the second section was to collect data on psychological status of retirees and the last section was to collect data on guidance and counseling services. The pre-test of the instruments was carried out on a sample of 30 male and 15 female public servant retirees by use of split-half technique which involved splitting the items in odd-even number. The pilot sample was drawn from the neighboring Kakamega South District of Kakamega County. The internal consistency of the items was determined by use of Cronbach alpha and an alpha coefficient of 0.65 obtained was considered reliable and then the items were adopted for the study. The selected sample of retirees was traced with the help of local administration officers from their respective location and sub-locations. The respondents were given questionnaire and asked to score while at home and return to specified place after one week. The data that was collected was analyzed using percentiles and chi square at 0.05 level of significance with the help of SPSS version 17.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The study sought to determine socio-economic status of retirees by determining their capacity to pay bills. Results of response of participants on their capacity to pay for their bills are presented in table 1.

Gender	Capacity to Pay Bills		
	Weak	Fair	Strong
Male	81 (54%)	42 (28%)	27 (18%)
Female	24 (50%)	21 (43.75%)	3 (6.25%)

Table 1: Retirees Capacity to Pay Bills

Results presented in table 1 revealed that 54% (n=150) of male retirees against 50% (n=48) of female retirees had weak capacity to pay for their bills. The weak capacity by both gender to pay for their bills was pointed out as either due to little resources to spend at their disposal or a huge burden in caring for their dependants. This was as a result of poor salary public servants earned while working thereby occasioning low levels of wealth accumulation. But the population of male retirees who were finding it easier to pay for their bills was 18% (n=150) compared to 6.25% (n=48) of female retirees. This results point out that male gender had stronger capacity to pay for their bills compared to female gender. The difference in the capacity of gender to pay for their bills was explained as a result of long periods of enforced artificial separations in the social and economic roles of men and women. This difference was further enhanced by nature of occupation of each gender that influenced a lopsided access to credit favouring male workers more than female workers (Cohen, Kluegel & Land, 1981). As a result of this, the level of accumulation of wealth was unequal among gender, a situation that led to lack of wealth among female gender in retirement, hence inhibiting them as consumers to afford to pay for their bills.

The study also sought to determine psychological status of public servant retirees by determining the levels of attitudes against them. Thus the results of response on levels of social attitudes by community towards retirees are presented in table 2.

Gender	Attitude		
	Positive	fair	Negative
Male	15 (10%)	60 (40%)	75 (50%)
Female	2 (4.2%)	16 (33.3%)	30 (62.5%)
Total	17 (8.6%)	76 (38.4%)	105 (53%)

Table 2: Levels of Social Attitudes by Community towards Retirees

From the results presented in table 2 it was revealed that, 62.5% (n=48) of female retirees compared to 50% (n=150) of male retirees experienced negative social attitudes. The results further revealed that 53% of participants experienced high levels of negative attitudes from the community. This scenario is blamed on diminished amount of income or wealth upon. That is why retirees felt discriminated especially on issues such as service delivery, or other social functions that required good financial muscle. As such retirees felt exposed to ridicule either due to their diminished income or as a group of persons unable to take care of their dependants (Musau, 1998). But this discriminated them from exercising their desire to be fully active citizens or recognize their potential to contribute to society. That is why only 4.2% (n=48) of female retirees and 10% (n=150) of male retirees experienced positive social attitudes. It is from these reasons that Giddens (1998) compared retirement to a form of exclusive welfare dependency, created by societies to separate older people from the majority into a 'retirement ghetto'.

The study further sought to determine psychological status of public servant retirees by determining levels of withdrawal tendencies by retirees. The results of the responses on the levels of withdrawal tendencies experienced by participants are presented in table 3.

Gender	Withdrawal tendencies		
	low	normal	high
Male	28 (18.7%)	32 (21.3%)	90 (60%)
Female	14 (29.2%)	11 (22.9%)	23 (47.9%)
Total	42 (21.2%)	43 (21.7%)	113 (57.1%)

Table 3: Levels of Withdrawal Tendencies Experienced Participants

The results of table 3 revealed that 60% (n=150) of male retirees compared to 47.9% (n=48) of female retirees exhibited high levels of withdrawal tendencies. Furthermore the results revealed that a total of 57.1% (n=198) of retirees displayed very high levels of withdrawal tendencies. These high levels of withdrawal tendencies were attributed to desire by retirees to find solitary activities such as doing chores at home to replace earlier activities such as going out to social functions (Gagliardi *et al*, 2007). In addition retirees found solitary activities such as personal hobbies as providing satisfying experiences such as relaxation, recognition or simply absorbing. At the same time, female gender sees these activities as merely a continuity of part of their previous activities. However Morrow-Howell (2010) points out that the type and nature of leisure chosen by retiree hence level of relaxation, was actually dictated by level of education and socio economic status.

The study further sought to determine relationship between guidance and counseling services and socioeconomic and psychological status of retirees. The study therefore sought to determine levels of exposure of retirees to guidance and counseling services before retirement. Results of response of participants on the level of exposure to guidance and counseling services are presented in table 4.

Gender	Pre-counseling services	
	Present	Absence
Male	27 (18%)	123 (82%)
Female	15 (31.25%)	33 (68.75%)

Table 4: Level of Exposure to Guidance and Counseling Services

The results of table 4 revealed that over 31% (n=48) of female retirees compared to 18% (n=150) of male retirees received guidance and counseling services. These results reveal that a small number of participants were exposed to guidance and counseling services. This was due to lack of guidance and counseling services specifically tailored towards those proceeding for retirement. But at the same time the results reveal that male retirees turned out to receive the guidance and counseling services compared to female retirees. This difference in gender was because of cultural beliefs which emphasizes that a male member of society should not show any signs of weaknesses in discharging of his affairs (Hansen & Gama, 1996).

The study further sought to determine relationship between guidance and counseling services and socioeconomic and psychological status of retirees by determining the levels of influence of guidance and counseling services on them. Results of response of participants on rating of influence of guidance and counseling services offered is presented in table 5.

Gender	Influence of Counseling		
	Low	Average	High
Male	5 (18.5%)	10 (37%)	12 (44.5%)
Female		5 (20%)	10 (80%)

Table 5: Rating of Influence of Guidance and Counseling Services Offered

From the results of table 5, 52.4% of retirees responded that guidance and counseling services had a high influence on them. But of this percentage, 80% (n=15) of female retirees against 44.5% (n=27) of males retirees were of this opinion. The difference of amount of influence among gender was pointed out by Hansen and Gama, (1996) as a result of cultural gender stereotyping that had forced female gender to readily accept lower status and as such was readily receptive to guidance and counseling services in order to benefit. These results reveal that guidance and counseling services were beneficial implying retirees were able to make better decisions in retirement (Morril & Forrest, 1970). This was because they made decisions that were informed, especially when it came to examining their values, attitudes, needs conflicts and relationships with others.

The study sought to answer the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between Guidance and Counseling and Indicators of Socio Economic and Psychological Status of former public servants. The responses of the participants on relationship between Guidance and Counseling and Indicators of Socio Economic and Psychological Status of Retirees were analyzed to produce a chi square result presented in table 6.

	Guidance and Counseling services	
	Chi Square	Degrees of Freedom
Social Participation and Relationship	16.82	4
Lifestyle	6.72 *	4
Capacity to Pay Bills	10.37	4
Stress and Anxiety	11.14	4
Attitude	20.19	4
Withdrawal Tendencies	3.2*	4
	68.44	24

Table 6: Chi Square of relationship between Guidance and Counseling and Indicators Of Socio Economic and Psychological Status of Retirees ( p value = 0.05)

The results of calculated chi square values for indicators of socio economic and psychological status of retirees presented in table 6 produced a chi square value of 68.44. The calculated value was greater than table value of 36.42 at 0.05 level of significance for 24 degrees of freedom. The difference was significant hence the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between guidance and counseling services and socio-economic and psychological status of former public servants

residing in Vihiga County was rejected. This implied that there was a relationship between guidance and counseling services and socio-economic and psychological status of former public servants residing in Vihiga County. The results point out that retirees are influenced despite the study revealing that guidance and counseling services were scantily available. As such the services were highly rated. Even then, female gender embraced the services more than male gender a situation that is pointed out by Hansen and Gama, (1996) as a result of gender stereotyping. But due to a strong desire to succeed after failure to manage their transition into retirement, male gender was expressing interest in guidance and counseling, despite cultural challenges (O'Neil, 1987). This was due to high level of influence observed among female retirees compared to male retirees. As such guidance and counseling services was being viewed as a means to redeem their self image that had presented them as competent (Davenport & Yurich, 1991).

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings on the objective showed that there was statistically significant relationship between guidance and counseling services and socio-economic status and psychological status of former public servants residing in Vihiga County. The relationship was positive such that those that received the services rated the services highly. This implied that guidance and counseling services was beneficial for one proceeding for retirement (Morril & Forrest, 1970). As a result, despite cultural challenges (O'Neil, 1987) the study found out that there was a strong desire for the services occasioned by desire to succeed after failure by some retirees to manage their transition into retirement. This was because guidance and counseling services was being seen as a means to redeem the earlier self image that had presented them with a higher social rating (Davenport & Yurich, 1991). Based on the above conclusions, it was recommended that stakeholders and employers work together to produce a policy that will incorporated guidance and counseling services in retirement program such that workers start well in advance to receive the services before they proceed for retirement.

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