

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF HUMANIST AND SYSTEMIC APPROACHES TO COUNSELLING ON SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG 21ST CENTURY YOUTHS IN OBIO-AKPOR LGA, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the extent humanist approach to counselling and systemic approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions and independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The population for the study consists of 545 youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State and sample size of 230 was drawn via purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire titled, Humanist and Systemic approach to counselling influence on suicide prevention Questionnaire (HSACISP). The instrument validated by experts had a reliability index of 0.77 via Cronbach Alpha technique. Results showed that humanist and systemic approaches to counselling influence on suicide prevention among 21st century youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State were positive and humanist approach to counselling significantly influences suicide prevention based on gender among the youths but systemic approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention based on gender among the youths. It was recommended that the result-oriented approaches to counselling be used by counsellors on the prevention of suicide among youths.

Keywords: *Humanist Approach, Systemic Approach, Counselling, Suicide*

Introduction

The world we live in is filled with diverse challenges and situations that require answers and solutions. The pressure can get so high if there is little or no immediate alleviation. In response to the chaos and trouble laden scenarios, there are people who consider just one way as the option to end all the differences and dissatisfactions. That one way to them is suicide. One view point holds suicide as all cases of death that occurred either directly or

indirectly from a positive or a negative act of the victim which he knows will produce this result (Taylor 1982). By Implication, suicide can take place in a way that may not easily point to the act or activity of cutting short one's life. Suicide has behind it a factor that propels it. According to Baechler (1980), all behaviours that seek and find the solution to an existential (or existing) problem by making an attempt on the life of the subject involved is known as

suicide. Suicidal behaviours are thoughts or tendencies that started off a person and put them at risk for committing suicide.

Suicide in recent times has been seen to be on the rise, going by statistics available. It was asserted in 2019 in an article by World Health Organization (WHO) that close to 800,000 people die yearly due to suicide. WHO, brought out suicide rates by country per 100,000 people for the year 2016. Nigeria was the 15th country globally and 7th in Africa. WHO data shows Nigeria had suicide rate of 17.3 per 100,000 people. (www.africacheck.org).

Suicide is the deliberate act of taking one's life by self. It is the act of intentionally causing one's own death (Williams & Wilkins, 2006). There are different and various ways by which people have committed suicides or attempted suicide. Every failed suicidal attempt becomes a risk factor on its own for the simple reason that the individual will most likely try again. Suicide is not a disease but a death that is caused by a self-inflicted intentional action or behaviour (Sil-Verman & Maris, 1995). Suicide is a death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour (Stone, Holland, Bartholow, Crosby, Davis & Wilkins 2017).

An assertion, according to Suicide Prevention Resource Centre (SPRC, 2018) has it that the 2nd leading cause of death among the ages of 15-34, in the whole world is suicide. Not all suicide attempts ends up in actual suicide. Some victims are intercepted & rescued. The rate is stipulated at one suicide for every estimated 25 suicide attempts by Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2018). To the researchers' observation, there are quite a number of deaths of young people and all indications point to suicide. Quite a number have also been ascertained. One of such is the story of an undergraduate of the Niger Delta University who jumped into the River in 2019 (Adejoh, 2019). The victim, Uzaka Ebiweni was in his 3rd year studying medicine and surgery in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences of the University. The reason for his suicide was said to be failure in his exams. Uzaka was shortlisted alongside 21 students for withdrawal by the University management. As is the case with most suicide cases, the late Uzaka Ebiweni gave a hint of his intention to commit suicide on his social media platform of whatsapp status.

Many a times the hints dropped by suicide victims either pass unnoticed or are ignored or totally seen as unserious or a joke. It is in this situation that counselling can serve as a huge preventive measure.

Gender and act of suicide

Does gender affect the act of suicide? This is a question that needs to be examined. According to Freeman, Mergl & Kows (2017), statistics has it that the number of males who attempt and commit suicide are higher than the females who attempt and commit suicide. On the contrary, the number of females who attempt suicide and eventually do not commit suicide are far less than that of the males. Furthermore, the number of females that attempt suicide remains higher than their male counterparts. From this, it could be deduced or proposed that, the females experience suicidal thoughts and

tendencies but most times fail to carry it out. It is possible that the difference in emotional makeup of the females and males is responsible for this significant variation. The females are typically known to be more prone to feelings and emotional outburst or dispositions, while the males are said to be of a different mould emotionally. The female gender appears to focus, concentrate and nurse their feelings amidst logical calculations. These dispositions make them liable to contemplating and attempting suicide but in most cases so feebly. The females experience and entertain suicidal thoughts but end up not carrying the act through. This may be due to the fact that the female gender employs more good reasoning and arrive at a position where they realize that causing their own deaths is not a very good option or perhaps they lack the inner strength and will power to carry out such devastating line of action as suicide.

Mina kim, Gyung Jae and Young Hoon-Lee (2015), examined suicide attempts and prevention according to gender. Data were collected from males and females. Findings showed a significant trend towards an increase on suicide for males and lower for females. Fireman (2012), and Emma Hamilton and Bonnie Klimes-Dougan (2015) also had similar results in their studies on suicide prevention based on gender. Their various findings indicate that the humanist approach to counseling on suicide prevention based on gender was not significant. Whereas there is a significant influence of systemic approach to counselling on suicide prevention among youths based on gender.

Recently there has been a gradual but consistent upsurge of suicide attempts & suicides by individuals. The upsurge has necessitated the need for suicide prevention.

So many stories of suicide and suicide attempts abound both published and speculated and majority of the cases fall within the ages of 18 to 35years (Robinson, Malone, Williamson, Baldwin & Hetcher, 2018).

Suicide Prevention

Considering the high rise in suicide attempts as well as suicide itself, the need for preventive measures arose. While suicide is a death caused by self-directed injurious behaviour with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour, suicide attempt is the non-fatal self-directed and potentially injurious behaviour with any intent to die as a result of the behaviour (CDC, 2018). Suicide prevention is simply the act of ensuring that individuals who may be having suicidal thoughts and hindered from carrying through their intentions of taking their lives by any means. Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking them seriously (www.helpguide.org).

According to Stone, Holland et al (2017), preventing suicide has to do with three basic components which include; the strategy, the approach and the programs/policies and practices. There are so many factors that suicide is attributed to and these include bipolar disorder, acute depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as sexual violence, mental health, substance abuse among others.

Suicide prevention in view of the increasing rate of suicides, especially

among youths is therefore a very pertinent phenomenon. There is no single measure to suicide prevention, but a combination of different approaches and techniques is usually employed. Various therapeutic interventions are used in suicide preventions. Some of which are highlighted below:

Improving Mood-Promoting Access to Collaborative Treatment (IMPACT), Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Suicide Prevention (CBT-SP)

This CBT-SP involves counselling at different stages. According to CDC (2018), it uses a risk-reduction, relapse prevention approach that involves analysis of risk factors such as relationship problems, school/work related difficulties. Families are also counseled to develop problem solving skills and family support system. (www.researchgate.net>p)

Counselling

Overtime it has come to the knowledge of people who take interest in suicide studies that some people who contemplate suicide will pull through with the act after mentioning it and opening up for discussion. Thus it should not be taken for granted or believed that when a person who has exhibited suicidal behaviour opens up for discussion, that such a person is off the danger list, rather this is when counselling would be most appropriate and pertinent.

The essence of counselling is to proffer solution or help to guide a person through the process of acquiring or securing answers to undefined circumstances. Counselling therefore

implies session or sessions of interactions with an individual who is in need of help, guidance or direction for the purposes of getting an answer or clue to a problem. Counselling is a relationship in which the counselor and the client work together in co-operation with the aim of finding solution to problems (Ekwe & Nwamuo, 2008). It then means that for proper counselling to take place there has to be an agreement between the counselor and the counselee. This makes for understanding and effectiveness, in the absence of which there may not be good outcome or result. Invariably, counselling transcends beyond mere discussion and it is not an imposition or one-sided communication.

In the researchers' opinion, counselling is a process of putting counselees or clients through, in order for them to learn how to make decisions and formulate new ways of behaving, thinking and feeling.

In professional counselling, rapport needs to be established between the persons involved. The outcome of counselling is expected to be positive hence the pre-requisite of having a cordial disposition by the counselor.

Counselling means a help given to individuals that are in temporary distress by a professionally trained personnel in order to overcome distress. Counselling involves all kinds of relationship that is specially aimed at assisting people to become more fully aware of themselves as well as to adjust to the changes in their environment (Ezeribe, 2014).

Humanist approach

Humanist approach which is the same as humanistic approach to counselling

focuses on the uniqueness of the individuals. The approach thrives on the belief that every individual has the ability and capacity to work towards self-actualization. In this approach, counselees are encouraged to see problems as not caused by events in life but rather how one responds to the problems, that is to say, how a person experiences it. Put in another way, humanist approach to counselling empowers counselees to respond positively to life issues and challenges rather than negatively. The way one reacts or handles a negative occurrence goes a long way to determine how quickly and effectively he or she could do away with a bad experience and move on or get stuck in it. Humanist approach reveals clearly that negative responses to life events lead to emotional upset and affects one psychologically. Therefore, the approach encourages counselees to accept self; both the negative and positive aspects of their characters and personalities while working to get better. Efforts are made by counselors using this approach to help the counselees to search, discover, explore and think through their own thoughts and feelings in order to seek out solutions to their problems. The approach also tends to look at “why” behaviour is exhibited and checks how to redirect energy on other better things as to improve behaviour.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987) developed a therapy in use in this approach and it helps the individual focus on how they feel which therefore makes it client-centered. In this approach, a bulk of the responsibility lies on or with the client who is guided to think through and proffer solution to his problem with the help,

warmth, support and empathy from the counselor. The counselor must not judge the individual no matter what occurs during the session; instead he/she should show warmth. Nevertheless, the counselor is not expected to be dishonest or act superior but to address issues directly albeit being friendly. This approach elevates how a person feels about himself/herself, which borders on issues of self-esteem and confidence. High self-esteem goes a long way to cushion the effects of some experiences in life or occurrences one may encounter and forms the basis for response or reaction. In employing this approach in counselling, the counselor helps the individual to seek out ways to build self-esteem and get into a better position to deal with issues and handle challenges encountered.

In effect, humanist approach creates self-awareness & self-realization which altogether enables an individual to perform better, adapt to changes, adjust behaviour patterns and confront challenges and changes that come.

Systemic approach to counselling:

Generally, systemic approach simply refers to a way complex system is handled with a global point of view and devoid of focus on details. Systemic approach therefore aims for a better and clearer understanding of complexities but without simplifying reality in the process. (Belleville, Galibert & Duru, 2019).

Systematic implies a thorough series of steps to follow whereas systemic has to do with that which refers to a system. Systemic refers to the whole system, throughout the whole system

while systematic refers to being methodical or intentional.

Systemic approach to counselling tends to find out the deep patterns in a person's lifestyle, relationships outside and with the family. This certainly enables one expose or reveal how people relate with, or communicate and behave within a given system and behaviour is based on beliefs about his/her individual roles. This approach to counselling recognizes and deals with a counsellee as part of a broader system rather than in isolation. It seeks to unveil some unhealthy patterns of behaviour so as to get them altered or adjusted within the existing system. Systemic approach to counselling does not seek to identify the root cause of such patterns of behaviours. This is almost a direct opposite of psychodynamic approach which tends to trace the origin of unhealthy patterns of behaviours to an individual's childhood and growing up. Systemic approach could be used to handle such issues as anxiety, depression, addictions, and low self-esteem among others. The constructs mentioned have direct links to suicide.

Aim: The aim of this paper is to determine the extent humanist & systemic approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor (LGA) of Rivers State. Specifically, the study determined;

1. The extent humanist approach to counselling influences suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor (LGA) of Rivers State.
2. The extent systemic approach to counselling influences suicide

prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor (LGA) of Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does humanist approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.
2. To what extent does systemic approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

Hypotheses

1. Humanist approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.
2. Systemic approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

Methodology

The design for this study is descriptive. The population for the study consists of 545 youths in Obio-Akpor LGA of Rivers State and sample size of 230 drawn via purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was used in view of the fact that the study is on suicide which specifically applies to the youths in the context of this study. The instrument for

this study was a questionnaire titled, humanist and systemic approach to counselling influence on suicide prevention Questionnaire (HSACISP). It contains two sections: section A, which elicits information on humanist approach to counselling and section B, which elicits information on Systemic approach to counselling. The instrument utilized four point Likert scale which required the youths to indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement with the items, thus: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The humanist and systemic approach to counselling had 10 items respectfully.

The instrument was face validated by experts in Educational Measurement

and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined using 50 youths that were not part of the study. The instrument was administered once to the subjects. The index value of reliability was obtained using Cronbach Alpha. Value gotten was 0.77 which was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. Copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents selected by the researchers, and closely monitored for completion and collection. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions and independent t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

RQ1: To what extent does humanist approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor LGA, Rivers State.

H01: Humanist approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor LGA, Rivers State.

Table 1: A t-test analysis of humanist approach to counseling influence on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

Gender	n	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Male	110	18.56	2.97	218	1.63	0.104	Retain H02
Female	120	19.17	2.62				p>0.05

Table 1 showed that the mean for males is 18.56 with standard deviation of 2.97 and the mean for females was 19.17 with standard deviation of 2.62. This also indicates that humanist approach to counselling influences the females more than the males in suicide prevention

amongst 21st century youths because the females mean score is higher than the males mean score.

In addition, the table above showed that the result of the independent t-test yielded a t-value of 1.63 at 218 degree of freedom and a p-value of .104 which was

higher than the chosen alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. This means there is no statistically significant difference between male and female youths as regards humanist approach to counselling. Invariably, humanist approach to

counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

RQ2: To what extent does systemic approach to counselling influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor LGA, Rivers State.

H02: Systemic approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor LGA, Rivers State.

Table 2: A t-test analysis of systemic approach to counselling influence on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

Gender	n	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Decision
Male	110	17.94	3.12	218	2.07	0.039	Reject H01 p>0.05
Female	120	18.74	2.76				

Table 2 shows that the male youths mean is 17.94 with 3.12 as standard deviation while the mean for the female youths is 18.74 with standard deviation of 2.76. This indicates that systemic approach to counselling influences females more than males hence the female has higher value. The second part of the table above showing the independent t-test shows that the t-value of 2.07 at 218 degree of freedom and a p-value of .039 was obtained which was less than the chosen alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means there is statistically significant difference between the male and the female youths as regards systemic approach to counselling. Invariably, systemic approach to counselling significantly influences suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State.

Discussions

The results showed that there was no significant difference on the influence of humanist counselling approach on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Whereas there was significant difference on the influence of systemic counselling approach on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The finding of this study is in agreement with those of Mina Kim and Young-Hoonlee (2015), Fierman (2012), and Emma Hamilton and Bonnie Wimes-Dougan (2015) who showed no significant influence of humanist approach to counseling on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender and a significant influence of systemic approach

to counselling on suicide prevention based on gender and

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn; Humanist approach to counselling influence on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) is positive on the females and systemic approach to counselling influence on suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area (LGA) is as well positive on the females. Humanist approach to counselling does not significantly influence suicide prevention among 21st century youths based on gender in Obio-Akpor LGA while systemic approach to counselling significantly influences suicide prevention.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, it was recommended among others that:

1. Counsellors should adopt humanist and systemic approaches to counselling.
2. Counsellors should look into other counselling approaches for counselling youths; more especially the males to prevent their suicide tendencies.
3. Further study on some other counselling approaches should be carried out by counsellors so as to mitigate youth suicide.
4. Counsellors should ensure that counseling approaches they use are result oriented.

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