

EFFECTIVENESS OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS PROGRAM ON THE REDUCTION OF SUICIDAL RISK AMONG STUDENT IN ESAN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE

By

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Abstract

This study, investigated the effectiveness of mental health awareness program on the reduction of suicidal risk among secondary school student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State. The study employed a true-experimental research. Specifically, pre-test, post-test control group design. True-experimental design was employed because participant was randomized into experimental and control group. The experimental group and the control group were given pre-test and post-test. The post-test of the experimental group was after the treatment. The population consisted of all two hundred and twenty-five (225) senior secondary school (SS1-3) student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State. Multistage sampling technique was adopted and used to select 71 SS1-3 students who were having high suicidal risk. Two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire by the researcher titled; Suicidal risk among Undergraduate Student Inventory (SRUSI). The content validity of the instrument was ascertained by three experts. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to obtain a reliability coefficient value of 0.89. The value is high enough to guarantee the use of the instrument for the field work. The instrument was used to collect data for the study and the data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics of paired sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that MHAP is significantly effective in reducing suicidal risk among student in Esan West Local Government Area when compared to the inefficacy of the Control Group and irrespective of sex of the participant, MHAP reduced suicidal risk among them equally. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, counselling psychologists should, therefore, apply MHAP in reducing suicidal risk among student.

Keywords: *Suicide, Mental Health Awareness Program, Effectiveness and Sex*

Introduction

The highest gift a nation can bestow on her citizens is education and the main reason is to socialize her people through the transfer of desirable values, attitude and social learning which would help her citizens to relate effectively with themselves and others in the society. Nigeria's education

system encompasses three different sectors: Primary Education (6 years), Secondary School Education (Six years), and Tertiary Education (four to six years, depending on the program of study). Being a secondary school student can be an exciting and dynamic experience, it can

also present some challenges. Outside of the obvious academic pressures, students may have to deal with stresses related to physical or mental illness (such as, depression, anxiety), family issues, time management, moving away from home (for those in boarding school), financial concerns and a host of others. It is a fact that in secondary school, student can sometimes feel overwhelmed or discouraged as they encounter various life and academic challenges which could lead to suicide among the students.

Suicide could be seen as the act of forcefully taken one's own life as a result of psycho-social unattainable or unaddressed pressing issues. It can also be seen as a drastic and rash decision taken to take own life in order to escape from constant oppressing issues of life mostly when it appears there is no hope of survival or escape (Abiogun, 2019). Suicide has been identified to contribute to the alarming rate of deaths recorded across the country (Psychology, 2020). Suicide has been ranked as the 11th major leading factor that leads to death in 2020 which has the capacity to exterminate the life of more than 31,655 individuals which could be subject to the level of depression, oppression and social and biological demands in each of the years (Psychology, 2020). Suicidal is intentional. It is planned and executed. It is the act and process of taking one's life by force.

Suicide is a serious public health problem; responsible for 1.48% of deaths worldwide and the burden is much higher in adolescents and young adults, accounting for 8.64% of deaths among 20–24 years. It

is the third leading cause of death among 15–24 years (Aria, et al 2009) secondary school students are likely affected more than the general population because there have been several reported cases of suicide among them as reported in the media and Newspaper. It is no longer surprising to know that suicide is likely the second leading cause of death among students. Abiogun, (2019), discovered that academic and social pressures as well as new social environment and financial burden mounted on the student could be responsible for a high rate of suicidal risk among secondary school student. Moreover, common risk factors for suicide such as mental and substance use disorders are very common among in-school adolescent and this have been a concern to student, parents, government, and the school administrator (Branden, 2019). These they traced to some socio-demographic variables such as sex.

Sex of students could influence suicidal risk. Hawton et al (2017) discovered in his study that men are less emotional than women and it is generally believed that they can solve their emotional problems by themselves. Their reserved and ego-related nature usually prevents them from attempting suicide than the female gender. Men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women Garg and Trivedi, (2017). Furthermore, Hawton et al (2017) stated that suicide is common among women, with 5.1 percent than men 3.6 percent globally. Indeed, women attempt suicide more than men, but men are successful about three or four times more often than women. A large body of evidence highlights differences in the

suicidal behaviour of girls and boys, with more boys dying through suicide and more girls engaging in self-harm (Schrijvers *et al*, 2012). The researcher is of the view that this could be the reason why secondary school boys may refuse to seek for therapeutic assistance when going through suicidal feelings and depression. Suicidal risk whether attempted or completed is detrimental to the health, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of such a victim. Suicidal ideation is strong desire that drives or pushes one to have self-dead. It is as a result of self-defeating thoughts and feelings that are unfounded and unjustifiable. (Psychology, 2020) It is shredded with mystifications of why life is very sordid and unbearable. People with suicidal thoughts and ideations are supposed to be helped out of the situation and brought to realities of life. This state of suicidal risk among undergraduate student required great deal of behavioural and cognitive repositioning. Suicidal risk is likely one of the major challenges confronting the educational system in Nigeria, especially among secondary school students, consequently, there's need to manage this behaviour using therapeutic intervention. The researcher therefore made use of Mental Health Awareness Program (MHAP) to reduce suicidal risk among secondary school students.

Mental Health Awareness Program (MHAP) is an illness self-management intervention with an educational and psychological component that promotes healthy living. According to Mall *et al* (2018), Mental Health Awareness Program is a combination of skills and abilities such

as self-management, decision-making, positive attitudes, such as feeling hopeful about recovery and the ability to assume responsibility for one's own wellness; knowledge regarding early warning signs of suicidal thoughts and symptom triggers; and wellness skills, such as using one's social support network and following a daily plan for healthy living. MHAP has widely been used to reduce diverse mental health challenges and other maladjustment behaviour such as suicidal thoughts and attempts. MHAP is a behaviour management system which helps participants identifies personal wellness resources and how to use them in daily living, as well as deal with symptom triggers, early warning signs of illness exacerbation, suicide attempt and crisis periods. MHAP has proved to be efficacious in managing maladaptive and suicidal behaviour (Cook, 2011; & Fukui *et al* 2011). Consequently, the researcher therefore examined the Effectiveness of Mental Health Awareness Program in reducing suicidal risk among secondary school students in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

Suicidal behaviour is any deliberate action with potentially life-threatening consequences, and it often occur in response to a situation that the person views overwhelming such as social isolation, death of a loved one, emotional trauma, serious physical illness, aging, unemployment, or financial problems, guilty feelings or dependence on alcohol or other drugs. Ideally, students should be made to study under conducive environment without undue stress.

Conducive environment constitutes of a condition devoid of economic, financial, social, and psychological problems. This, however appears not to be so with secondary school students especially in Esan west Local Government Area, Edo State. Most secondary school students in Esan west Local Government Area as reported by the media and in Newspaper are facing some excruciating economic difficulties such as inability to pay their school fees, purchase essential textbooks for their subject, feed and clothe themselves or cope with academic work, and obtain good medical care especially for those in boarding house. These unaccomplished needs among others may culminate in suicidal tendencies. Just recently, there are five different cases of either completed or attempted suicide among secondary school students and was even reported in the newspapers. Indeed, different students face different life challenges at different times in their lives. While some survive from these challenges; others contemplate suicide as a way of escape. Therefore, can MHAP be effective in reducing suicidal risk and help student to plan for a better way of coping with the challenges they may face in school by finding alternative means to live a healthier and longer life? Consequently, the researcher examined MHAP in reducing suicidal risk among secondary school students in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to MHAP treatment.
2. There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to Control Group.
3. There is no significant interaction effect of treatment by sex in reducing suicidal risk of participants.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated the Effectiveness of Mental Health Awareness Program (MHAP) in reducing suicidal risk among secondary school student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State. Precisely, the objectives are to:

1. Determine the difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to MHAP treatment.
2. Ascertain if there is significant differences in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to Control group.
3. Determine if there is significant interaction effect of treatment by sex in reducing suicidal risk of the participant

Empirical Studies

Mental health awareness program influences how one think and feel about himself and others, and how one interprets events. It affects our capacity to learn, to communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships. It also influences one's ability to cope with change, transition and life events. Mental Health Awareness Program has been established to be a useful therapy in managing suicidal risk. This was confirmed in a research conducted by Yusuf et al (2019) which evaluated the efficacy of Mental Health Awareness Program for comorbid panic

disorder with agoraphobia (PDA) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) by joining treatment plans for both disorders. Three participants with primary PDA and secondary GAD took part in the study. After treatment, 2 of the 3 participants achieved high and stable functioning and maintained this level of functioning at 3-6- and 12 month follow-ups. The third participant also improved but only reached high end-state functioning at 6month follow-up. Finding shows that the combined treatment is relatively effective for PDA and GAD comorbidity.

Das et al., (2016) conducted a study on the effectiveness of mental health awareness education on reduction of depression and suicide among student who are about to graduate. The study was a quasi-experimental research design with 147 students as the target population. A sample of 125 was randomly selected. It was found that student in the experimental group reported less anxiety, depression, tension and suicide attempt after the treatment than students in the control group. It was concluded that mental health awareness education is therapeutic in reducing depression and suicide attempt of prospective university graduate.

In a study carried out by Mall et al. (2018) on the efficacy of mental health awareness program in reducing suicidal thought among in-school adolescents, a pre-test, post-test, control group quasi-experimental design with a 3x2x2 factorial matrix was used for the study. There were two treatment conditions (MHAP and SET) and a control group. The experimental groups were exposed to eight weeks

training sessions, while participants in the control group received no training. Nine hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance. The result showed that there was a significant difference in the suicidal thought of in-school adolescents exposed to treatment and control groups. The participants exposed to MHAP technique performed better than those in the control group. The result further showed that MHAP is more efficacious than SET in reducing suicidal thoughts among in-school adolescent. Kutcher, et al., (2016) examined reduction of suicidal risk among medical students who had low cumulative grade point (CGP) at the end of their first year in school; they investigated the effectiveness of mental health awareness program in reducing suicidal risk. Data was collected from 92 medical students who are in 200L. The finding showed a significantly reduction in the suicidal attempt of medical students after the therapy.

Methodology

The study employed a true-experimental research. Specifically, pre-test, post-test control group design. True-experimental design was employed because participant was randomized into experimental and control group. The experimental group and the control group were given pre-test and post-test. The post-test of the experimental group were after the treatment. The population consisted of all two hundred and twenty-five (225) senior secondary school (SS1-3) student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State. Multistage sampling technique was adopted and used to select 71 SS1-3 students who were

having high suicidal risk. Two hypotheses guided the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire by the researcher titled; Suicidal risk among Undergraduate Student Inventory (SRUSI). The content validity of the instrument was ascertained by three experts. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to obtain a reliability coefficient value of 0.89. The value is high enough to guarantee the use of the instrument for the field work.

Treatment Procedure

The study was carried out in three stages:

Stage 1: Pre-test Assessment

Stage 2: Treatment

Stage 3: Post-test Assessment

The first stage was the pre-testing of participants in the experimental and control group. The stage two was the treatment of the experimental group using mental health awareness program, while the control group was the non-attention group. Stage three was the post-test assessment of the participants in the experimental and the control groups.

Stage 1: Pre-test Assessment

The researcher administered the instrument as the pre-test assessment on all

the participants in the experimental and the control groups. This pretest formed the first part of the pre-treatment assessments. The purpose of this was to find out the suicidal risk levels of the respondents and at the same time to obtain the pre-test scores. The data that was collected formed the baseline proforma with which the post-test scores were compared. This was followed by the treatment after which the post-test assessment was done.

Stage 2: Treatment Assessment

This is the experimental stage, which commenced a week after the pre-test assessment where the treatment package was exposed to the participants. The treatment package is Mental Health Awareness Program, and Non-attention control group. No treatment was given to the Control Group. The treatment groups met for six weeks. Each week run for two sessions for 60 minutes per session.

Stage 3: Post-test Assessment

After the treatment, the two groups, the experimental and the control groups were post-tested by administering the same instrument used for the pre-test, after which their results were compared at the end of the treatment procedure.

Findings

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores on the reduction of suicidal risk among secondary school student in Esan West Local Government Area exposed to Mental Health Awareness Program.

Table 1: Paired sample t-test of pre-test and post-test mean scores on reduction of suicidal risk among student exposed to MHAP treatment

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	38	126.77	11.990	6.239	.000
Post-test	38	100.74	19.084		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 1 showed a t-value of 6.239 and a p-value of .000 testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. So the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores on the reduction of suicidal risk among secondary school student in

Esan West Local Government Area exposed to Mental Health Awareness Program.” is rejected. Consequently, mental health awareness program is significantly effective on the reduction of suicidal risk among secondary school student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to Control Group.

Table 2: Paired sample t-test of pre-test and post-test mean scores on reduction of suicidal risk of participants in the control group.

Test	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	38	121.959	20.268	-5.864	.000
Post-test	38	145.649	12.703		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 showed a t-value of -5.864 and a p-value of .000 testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha level. So the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk

mean scores of participants exposed to Control Group” is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of participants exposed to non-attention Control Group.

Hypothesis 3: There is no Significant Interaction Effect of Treatment by Sex on the Reduction of Suicidal Risk among Secondary School Student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State.

Table 3: Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Interaction Effect of Treatment by Sex on reduction of suicidal risk of participant

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	52647.483 ^a	5	10529.497	39.526	.000
Intercept	1159591.481	1	1159591.481	4.353E3	.000
Group	45505.465	2	22752.732	85.410	.000
Sex	.158	1	.158	.001	.981
Group* Sex	744.060	2	372.030	1.397	.252
Error	25573.840	96	266.394		
Total	1446560.500	102			
Connected Total	78221.324	101			

a. R Square = .673 (Adjusted R Square = .656)

Table 3 shows on F-value of 1.397 and a p-value of .252, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. The p-value is greater than the alpha level of 0.05; so the null hypothesis which states that “There is no Significant Interaction Effect of Treatment by Sex on the Reduction of Suicidal Risk among Secondary School Student in Esan West Local Government Area, Edo State.” is retained. This means that the therapy managed suicidal risk of males and females equally.

Discussion of findings

It was also found that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test suicidal risk mean scores on the reduction of suicidal risk among students exposed to Mental Health Awareness Program. Thus, it showed that the treatment was effective in reducing suicidal risk among secondary school student. This finding corroborates the findings in the study of Yusuf et al (2019) who discovered difference in their study. The study further agrees with the

study conducted by Das et al (2016) who equally found that mental health awareness therapy is efficacious on suicidal tendencies. Thus, MHAP is effective in reducing suicidal risk among secondary school student. The reason for the effect of the therapy in this study was, perhaps, because students were taught how to have confidence in their capability to achieve a given result, as well as solving problems, and dealing with changes that comes from rigorous school activities and demand, which changed how they feel, think and act.

The findings also revealed that there was a significance difference in the pre-test post-test suicidal risk mean scores of participants exposed to non-attentional group, meaning that the treatment was not effective on the participants. Since it was non-attentional group, there was no contact with the researcher’s treatment contents and thus, proving that the contents taught in the experimental group

were intact and had no leakage and as such prevented the study from Hawthorne effect.

The finding also revealed that there is no significant interaction effect by sex on the reduction of suicidal risk among student. This means that the therapy reduced the suicidal risk of males and female student in Esan West Local Government Area. In this study, the suicidal risk of males and female student exposed to the treatment package of MHAP was significantly reduced. This result disagrees with the study of Hawton et al (2017) where they observed gender differences on the efficacy of counselling for reducing suicidal tendencies. The study agrees with the work of Schrijver et al (2012) where they concluded that MHAP can be used to reduce suicidal risk among student regardless of their sex. However, the differences in the studies enumerated can be as a result of cultural differences and the effective contribution of the treatment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is, therefore, concluded that Mental Health Awareness Program was effective in reducing suicidal risk among student. Intervention was effective in reducing suicidal risk among student. This was significant from their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Recommendations

1. Mental Health Awareness Program should be used by counselling psychologists to assist student who are having suicidal tendencies.

2. It is recommended that sex of student should not be a factor when considering the application of MHAP to assist student reduced their suicidal risk.
3. Students should take advantage of the treatment packages of MHAP as this will help them to reduce suicidal risk thereby overcoming the obstacles and challenges that come with life and stressful school activities, this will also help them plan for a better way of coping with the challenges by finding alternative means to live a healthier and longer life.

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