

An Assessment of Secondary School Teacher's Attitudes toward Disorder and Mental Health Counseling in Birnin-Kebbi Metropolis Kebbi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to examine the attitudes of secondary school teachers towards disorder and mental health counseling in Birnin-kebbi metropolis in Kebbi State. The paper began with the introduction, concept of mental disorder, causes of mental disorder and their classifications. The paper extensively dwelt on the treatment of mental disorder based on some psychological principles. Attitude of secondary school teachers towards mental health counseling was also elaborated. Finally, conclusion and recommendations were offered. It was recommended that secondary school teachers should be given adequate encouragement to be able to develop positive attitudes towards mental health counseling in schools.

Keywords: Attitudes, Secondary School Teachers, Disorder, Mental Health Counseling.

Introduction

Over the years of human history, people have attempted to explain how best to understand the sickness or disorder of the mind (psychopathologist). In the 21st century, psychopathologist was known to have its origin from psychological trauma and biological dysfunction.

Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle noted that mental illness might be as a result of conflict between thought and emotions. The first to develop a theory of psychopathology proposing specific treatment techniques was Sigmund Freud. Understanding the functions of both psychological and biological factors in mental health disorder is now considered to be critical. The willingness of those afflicted with mental health to participate in scientific investigation has allowed significant strides to be recorded in understanding mental disorder.

Mental health as opined by Zimbardo, Johnson and McCann (2009) includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Steinberg (2003) showed four types of disorders as, mood disorders (such as depression or bipolar disorder) anxiety disorders. personality disorders. psychotic disorders (such as schizophrenia). Steinberg (2003) Indicated six (sign) of mental illness viz;

- Changes in personality. ...

- Changes in emotion. ...
- Isolation. ...
- Sudden absence of self-care. ...
- Sense of hopelessness or feeling overwhelmed. ...
- Warning Signs of Suicide.

Based on the above studies by Steinberg and Greigorenko (1997) have indicated for one to improve his mental wellbeing.

Tips for Improving Your Mental Wellbeing

1. Relax and reduce stress.
2. Find ways to learn and be creative.
3. Spend time in nature.
4. Connect with others.
5. Look after your physical health.
6. Try to get enough sleep.

Mental Health in the Teaching Profession and during a global pandemic has amplified the mental health issues that existed before COVID-19. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (2020) conducted a mental health check-in survey from 16–25 October 2020. They found that 69% of teachers had concerns about their mental health and/or wellbeing. Only 44% of teachers had these same concerns or questions regarding their mental health and/or wellbeing in a previous survey conducted in June 2020 (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2020). The stress and burnout teachers felt prior to COVID-19 are currently being amplified as teachers do their best to maintain the safety of their students and themselves during the pandemic (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2020). Another Canadian study, for example, surveyed 1,278 teachers to examine burnout during the pandemic. In their research of Canadian teachers during the early months of the pandemic, Sokal et al. (2020) explained that when teachers are in the initial stages of burnout and exhibiting high exhaustion, mitigating the situation must involve decreasing demands and providing selected resources. It is also important to recognize that teaching is gendered as a feminine profession (Drudy, 2008; Griffin, 1997), meaning women are still more predominant in the teaching profession than men (Schmude & Jackisch, 2019). According to data from Statistics Canada (2014), 59% of secondary school teachers are women, and this proportion increases to 84% in elementary school. Little literature discusses how gender structures teachers' mental health in a context of care at home. This knowledge gap is surprising, given the broader gender differences in mental health that exist in society and the disproportionate impact of the pandemic of women's mental health (Cabezas-Rodriguez et al., 2021; Thibaut & van Wijngaarden-Cremers, 2020)

Studies by Medmood, Inamullah, & Çerçikaya, (2022) () indicates that gender-wise, the number of male and female participants were 79 and 62 respectively. An independent sample t-test was used to compare the mean score of the mental health of male and female participants. There was a no significant difference in mental health of male ($M=20.75$,

SD=5.81) and female ($M=21.50$, $SD=5.69$); $t(140)=-0.757$, $p=0.450$. These results shows that the mental health of female teachers has no relationship with the mental health of male teachers.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To explain the concept of disorder and mental health counseling
- b) To outline the attitudes of Secondary School Teachers towards mental health counseling in Kebbi State

Research Questions

- a) Is there any significant difference in the responses of Secondary School teachers towards meaning of disorder and mental health counseling?
- b) is there any significant difference in the attitudes of secondary school teachers on disorder and mental health counseling?

Significance of the Study

Mental health counseling can help treat a variety of mental health problems such as : Depression, Eating disorder, Anger, Anxiety etc. It helps to identify common mental health problems and the type of support available to the patient. It makes patient aware of his mental state, face life challenges, transform current behavior, alleviate stress and offer important suggestions on healings, referrals and other mental health challenges. A revolution is already under way in mental health disorder as efforts are being intensified to create awareness on why people should understand the concept of mental health, its importance and accessible outlets.

Research Methodology

The study employed the use of survey research design. A sample of four secondary schools was selected using random sampling technique. This is done in order to have equal chances of being represented in the study. A total of 25 teachers were selected from each school, making a total of 100 teachers. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for the research. It was designed to obtain information on the general attitudes of secondary school teachers towards disorder and mental health counseling. The schools include the following:

- i. Unity Girls Secondary Schools B/kebbi
- ii. Government Day Secondary School G/Gwaji
- iii. Abdullahi Fodio Secondary School B/kebbi
- iv. Nagari Science College B/kebbi

Concept of Mental Disorder

It is a fact that physical illness can be easily detected by medical test, such as blood test. However, there are few instruments to diagnose mental illness. Many behaviors that are

considered normal in one setting may be seen as deviant in another setting. This is why some concept of psychopathology has to depend on cultural context. However, there are criteria to be considered in determining whether a behavior represent a psychopathology or not.? Does the behavior deviate from the cultural norms? is the behavior maladaptive? Is the behavior causing the individual personal distress?

Because of the difficulty to distinguish a normal from abnormal behavior, there is an increasing trend towards defining psychopathology as a thought and behavior that are maladaptive rather than deviant. The diagnostic criteria for all the major disorder categories include symptom of the disorder and must interfere with the person's life, such as work social relation or self-care Rapoport, (1990).

Classification of Mental Disorder

It is interesting to note that despite the problem in conceptualizing of mental health disorder, there are clear motives of categorizing them. Most treatments are specific, whether psychological or biological. Correct diagnosis can help the patients and family understands what the future might bring. Differentiating among various mental disorders is very critical for researchers.

To be able to investigate factors that contribute to the development and possible treatment of mental health disorder, there must be a way of grouping these disorders into meaningful way (Gazzanuga and Heatherton, 2003). The idea of categorizing mental disorder in a systematic and scientific manner was not officially adopted until the edition of the diagnostic and statistical manual (DSM) of mental disorder was published in (1952). Although it has undergone several revisions over the years, it remains the standard in the field of psychology and psychiatry (Gazzanuga and Heatherton, 2003).

Axis 1:

Clinical disorder and other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention (Schizophrenia, Mood disorder, Anxiety disorder, Sexual and gender disorder, Sleep disorder and Eating disorder).

Axis 2:

Mental retardation and personality disorder (Anti – social personality disorder, Paranoid personality disorder, Borderline personality disorder).

Axis 3:

General medical conditions that may be relevant to mental disorder (Cancer, Epilepsy, Obesity, Parkinson disease and Alchemies disease).

Axis 4:

Psychological and environmental problems that might affect the diagnosis of mental disorder (unemployment, divorce, legal problems, homelessness, poverty, parental over-

protection)

Axis 5:

Global assessment of functioning (Social psychological and occupational) Rated on a scale From 1 to 100, with 1 representing danger of hurting self or others and 100 meaning superior functioning in a wide range of areas.

Source: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association, 1994

Causes of Mental Health Disorder

Several factors are considered to play a significant role in the cause of mental disorder. Major among them includes the following:

1) Psychological Factors:

Psychological factors play an important role in the manifestation of treatment of mental disorder. Thoughts and emotions are shaped by the environment and can influence behavior. Let us consider two models here:

a) The family system model: This is based on the idea that the behavior of the individual should be considered within a social context particularly the family. Problems emanating from the individual are a clear manifestation of the problems within the family. Having a profile of the individual family interaction constitutes possible factors contributing to mental disorder.

b) Socio cultural model: This is the result of the interaction between individual and their cultures. Some disorders such as Schizophrenia are more common among the lower socioeconomic classes, whereas anorexia nervosa is among the middle and upper classes. These differences in the socio economic background could be due to the differences in life style, expectations and opportunities among the classes of society. It is important to note that, there are possible biases in the willingness to ascribed disorders to different social classes.

2) Cognitive – Behavioral Factors: This is based on the premise that abnormal behavior is learned. While the psychoanalyst focuses on unconscious internal factors, the behavioral approach is based on observable variables. The revised cognitive behavioral perspective includes the idea that thoughts and beliefs should be examined as another type of behavior that can be studied empirically. The central idea here is that thought can be distorted produce maladaptive behaviors and emotions.

a) Biological Factors: The main idea is how physiological factors such as genetics contribute to mental illness. Other biological factors also influenced the development and can cause mental illness. For example, the fetus is particularly vulnerable to mental illness,

and there is evidence that some mental disorders that may arise from prenatal problems such as maternal illness, malnutrition and exposure to toxins. Environmental toxins and malnutrition during childhood and adolescence can also put the individual at risk for mental illness. All these biological factors are thought to contribute to mental disorder because of their effects on the central nervous system.

Treatment of Mental Disorder based on Psychological Principles

a) Psychotherapy: Regardless of the theoretical perspective of the treatment-provider, is generally aimed at changing pattern of thought or behavior. Here are widely used approaches used to treat specific mental disorders. It is important to note that today many practitioners employed as many techniques as possible based on what the situation desires.

b) Psychodynamic therapy focuses on insight: The general goal of psychodynamic is to increase patient awareness of unconscious processes and how they affect daily functioning. With this process of psychological personal understanding, patients are freed of these unconscious influences and consequently, symptoms disappear.

c) Humanistic therapy or Client centered therapy: This is where people are encouraged to fulfill their individual potentials for personal growth through greater self-understanding. A key ingredient in the therapy is a safe and comforting setting for Clients to access their true feelings. Rather than directing behavior or passing judgments on the Clients' action and thoughts, the therapist helps the Client focus on his or her subjective experience, often by using reflective listening, in which the therapist repeat the Clients concerns in order to help the person clarify his or her feelings.

d) Cognitive behavioral therapy: Here, the therapist focuses on faulty cognitions. Cognitive therapies are based on cognitive theory that distorted thought caused maladjusted behavior and emotions. Modifying these thought patterns via specific treatment strategies could eliminate maladjusted behavior and emotions.

The most widely used version in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) tries both to correct faulty cognitions and to train Clients to engage in new behavior.

e) Group Therapy: Group therapy helps build social support. It varies on the type of patients enrolled in the group, the group treatment and the perspective of the therapist running the group. Many groups are organized around a particular type of problems (such as sexual abuse or around a particular type of Client like adolescence). The social support that the group members can provide each other is one of the best beneficial aspects of group therapy, and attendance at group therapy is often used to augment individual psychotherapy.

f) Family therapy: The patient family plays an important role in the treatment of mental disorder within the family context; each member plays a particular role and interacts with the other members in specific ways. In the process of therapy, the way the individual thinks, believe and interacts with others may change, and the change could have profound effects on the family dynamics.

Factors Affecting Mental Health

Certain important factors affect mental health of the individual

- i. A sudden loss of love one can affects mental health of the individual
- ii. Socioeconomic factors such as social exclusion, alienation etc
- iii. Too much stress, poor and unhealthy lifestyle, and
- iv. Negativity in the surroundings could contribute to mental health deterioration

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Questionnaire of Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes on Mental Health Counseling in Birnin-Kebbi Metropolis

S/N	Questionnaire on mental Health Counseling	Agree	%Agree	Disagree	%Disagree
1	Many do not understand or have doubts about mental disorder	70	70	30	30
2	Mental illness affects more people but help is limited	80	80	20	20
3	Depression, Anxiety, and anger are signs of mental disorder	70	70	30	30
4	Early detection is the key to addressing mental disorder	60	60	40	40
5	Counseling is the best way to cope with mental disorder	30	30	70	70
6	Therapy sessions can help treat various mental health problems	40	40	60	60
7	Mental health counseling helps you change your current behavior	30	30	70	70
8	Accepting your mental problems leads to healing	70	70	30	30
9	Counseling enables you to face different challenges of life	40	40	60	60

10	Too much stress and unhealthy life style can results in mental health anomaly	70	70	30	30
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Discussions

On the first question, respondents agreed that many secondary school teachers do not understand what is meant by mental health counseling. This is a clear manifestation of the fact that secondary school teachers are not adequately enlightened on mental health counseling.

Regarding the second question, secondary school teachers accepted the fact that mental health affects more people, but the help given to such people is limited. The third question indicated that the respondents agreed that, depression, anxiety and anger are signs of mental disorder with 70% score. Similarly, on question 4, respondents were unanimous that early detection is key to addressing mental disorder.

On question 5, their response indicates that they do not agree with the assertion that counseling is the best way to cope with mental health. This is also an indication which shows their narrow knowledge regarding mental health counseling. The response on question 6, further reaffirmed their negative attitudes towards mental health counseling in schools. This was attested by 60%, indicating their disagreement with the assertion.

On question 7, respondents do not believe that mental health counseling can help change an individual behavior with a score of 70% on the disagreement column. However, on question 8, the responded indicated that they are compatible with the assertion that accepting mental health problems leads to healing with a score of 70%.

On question 9, the respondents do not agree that counseling enables one face different challenges in life with 60% score. Finally, on question 10, the respondents agreed with the assertion that too much stress and unhealthy life style can results in mental health anomaly.

Conclusion and Findings

- 1) Secondary school teachers acknowledged the fact that there were misunderstanding and doubts among people on what mental health counseling was all about and that too much stress and unhealthy lifestyle contribute serious mental issues;
- 2) It was also agreed that depression, anxiety and anger are signs of mental disorder;
- 3) The respondents disagreed that counseling is the best way to cope with mental health and that therapy sessions do not help treat mental disorder;
- 4) Respondents do not believe that with counseling sessions an individual can face various life challenges.

Recommendations

- 1) The attitudes of secondary school teachers towards mental health counseling in Kebbi state is not encouraging, measures need to be put in place in order to create a

positive perception among secondary school teachers on mental health counseling in schools;

- 2) Secondary school teachers needed to be seriously sensitized and enlightened on mental health counseling through workshop and seminars;
- 3) Since mental health counseling contribute to the overall development on the individual, secondary school teachers needed adequate encouragement and motivation to develop positive attitudes on mental health counseling and establish a forum where mental health issues can be discussed.

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