

The Effectiveness of Group Counselling on Secondary School Students' Attitude to Sexual Behaviour in Benin City

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Abstract

A substantial increase in the proportion of adolescent students' engagement in sexual activity has become worrisome in our contemporary secondary schools. As such this piece of work was carried out to explore the effect of group counselling on secondary school students' attitude to sexual behaviour in Benin City. The study has one research objective, research question and hypothesis. The population comprised of eight mixed secondary schools, out of which two schools were sampled. A quasi experimental design was adopted. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using independent t-test. It was found that there was a significant difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed. And conclude that students exposed to sexuality education have the capacity to positively handle sexual activity than those not exposed. Few among the recommendations was that; counselling services should be provided in secondary schools to help students understand their bodies well as adolescent, besides, awareness should be created on sexual behaviour among students by school counsellor continuously to enable students make well informed decision on sexual issue.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Group counselling, Secondary School, Students Attitude, Sexual Behaviour*

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Background to the Study

In our contemporary society, a substantial increase has been observed in the proportion of adolescents engaged in sexual activity. Naturally, adolescents learn to blend with social construct around their terrain and most times they become motivated to make decisions regarding developmental issues like values, beliefs, careers, life styles, and relationship with opposite sex. They have the tendency of cultivating habits, imitate ways of life, with behavioral practices imbibed or modified in the midst of global interconnectivity. Youth stage is susceptible to entanglement of pollutants, amoral practices, nonconventional nuances, immorality with emotional influences leading to sexuality, altered appearance and functioning of a sexually maturing body, learning sexual desires, confronting sexual attitudes and values, experimenting sexual behaviors, and integrating these feelings, attitudes, and experiences into a developing sense of self. The challenge is accentuated by the unfamiliar excitement of sexual arousal, the attention connected to being sexually attractive, and the new level of physical intimacy and psychological vulnerability created by sexual encounters.

Adolescents require emancipation through counselling on the adverse repercussion of wrong behavioural practices on sexuality that violates and devastates human dignity, Ogundipe and Ojo, (2015). Also, noted by Amao Kehinde (2011) and Karianna (2013), is that, sexuality education enlightens the adolescents on sexuality issues and prevents them from developing sense of guilt, horror, disgust or fear, especially, when sex is to be performed at the right time for the right purpose and with the right person; knowledge of sexuality education helps adolescents make quality decisions on sex-related issues; it helps them learn about themselves. Kleinplatz (2001) and Ajidahun (2013) assert that, counselling approaches in sex counselling depend on the client age, sexual orientation and present problems. There are lots of approaches in counselling like group behavioural counselling, psychoanalytic counselling, client centered counselling, existential counselling and a host of others that could be applied to sex counselling. Group counselling in particular, is useful in dealing with these feelings of isolation, because it gives adolescents the means to express conflicting feelings, explore self-doubts, and realize that they share these concerns with their peers. Group counselling gives adolescents the opportunity to question openly their values, and talk freely about their deepest concerns. In the group, adolescents can learn to communicate with their peers, benefit from the modeling provided by the leader, and can safely experiment with reality and test their limits, which will help them make well informed decisions and determine their own behaviour.

Statement of the Problem

The increase of sexual activities among students in our present-day schools are creating challenges for education worldwide. Adolescents are known to be an adventurous in nature, and often engage in risky sexual behaviour which could result to varying problems ranging from unwanted pregnancy, abortion and contacting STIS (Sexually Transmitted Infections) among others. Given the amount of public concern on the consequences of students' indulgence in sex, there is need for counselling intervention programs to checkmate the attitude of students towards risky sexual behaviour which consequential effects lead to school dropout, prostitution, drug addiction and armed robbing and other social vices. Therefore, this research seeks to find out the effectiveness of group counselling on secondary school students' attitude on sexual behaviour.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Find out if group counselling is effective in inculcating acceptable sexual behaviour.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

1. Is there any difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude to sexual behaviour?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude towards sexual behaviour.

Review of Related Literature

The concept, group counseling, is a dynamic, interpersonal process through which individuals within the normal range of adjustment work within a peer group and with a professionally trained counselor, exploring problems and feelings in attempt to modify their attitudes so that they are better able to deal with developmental problems. According to Egbochuku (2008), counselling is actually a relationship between a concerned person and a person with a need or person to person relationship in which the clients is assisted in understanding and clarifying their views and learn how to reach self-determined goals through meaningful and well informed choices. Though, sometimes it may involve more than two persons.

Counselling, as the third arm of educational program (i.e. instruct, administration and guidance), in its role and effectiveness has become a reality in the Nigerian –educational system. Alutu (2007) states that, school counselling is a profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment with the view of reducing the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede students' academic success, besides, the profession also fosters conditions that ensure educational equity, access, and academic excellence for all students.

Group counseling (in the context of secondary school environment) provides an enabling platform where the counsellor assists their clients (students) to express their feelings, explore them, clarify their views, attitudes and understand themselves. Alao (1983) explains that group counselling could be both preventive and remedial depending on the type of problem and the nature of the social interaction. The concept group counselling has been variously defined by Okobia (1991), Denga (1986) and Oladele (1984) as a process whereby a counselor assists a number of individuals to discuss their common interpersonal problems with a view to finding solutions to them. It focuses on assisting counselees (e.g. students) to cope with their day to day adjustment and development concern such as behaviour modification, study skills, developing personal relationship skills, sexuality education, values and career decision making.

Sexual Behaviour

These are actions or activities that can lead to reproduction and stimulation of sexual organs. Such actions could be orientation, courting, sex position and genital reflexes. It is a means of maintaining human social relationship and to make bonds for life. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), a healthy sexual behaviour is that which involve enjoyment of sexual relation without exploitation, safe pregnancy, childbirth, avoidance of unintended pregnancies and avoidance of sexually transmitted infection.

Sexual behavior among adolescent has been the focus of increasing attention over the past decade, after the advent of research that demonstrated a consistent relationship between sexual abuse and sexual behavior in children. Although a broad range of sexual behaviors has been observed in normal children, further research is needed to expand the knowledge base of practicing pediatricians regarding what is normative about sexual behavior in children.

Hareesh (2014) explains that, sexual behavior in children can be sorted into a number of categories, all of them having an adult behavioral correspondence, which include adherence to personal boundaries, exhibitionism, gender role behavior, self-stimulation, sexual anxiety, sexual interest, sexual intrusiveness, sexual knowledge, and voyeuristic behavior. Personal boundaries reflect the presumed interpersonal distance maintained by most people. Young children, who are just learning the culturally appropriate distance, may stand too close, rub against people, or casually touch their mother's breasts or father's genitals. Exhibitionistic behavior in children, deliberately exposing body parts to other children or adults, may also take the form of "playing doctor." Gender role behavior reflects the sex-typing of interests and behaviors seen in children, and self-stimulation subsumes masturbation as well as touching or rubbing different parts of the body to bring pleasure. Children may show excessive modesty or anxiety at displays of affection between parents or other individuals. Alternatively, children may be very curious and open regarding sexual matters, including interest in the opposite sex and interest in more mature television shows or videos.

According to Johnson (2009), sexuality is integral to a person's identity and develops throughout life. It is natural for children and young people to express their sexuality through their behaviour. However, healthy sexual behaviour can be expressed in a variety of ways through play and relationships relating to the stage of development. Sexual behaviours go beyond sex to include any talk, touch, questions, conversations and interests which relate to sexuality and relationships. When children or young people display sexual behaviour which increases their vulnerability or causes harm to another, adults have a responsibility to take action to provide support and protection. In study carried out by Egbochuku and Ekanem (2008) on the attitude of Nigerian secondary school adolescent towards sexual practices revealed that; peer group pressure (61.2%), parental indifference (43%), exposure to pornographic films (65.1%), knowledge and use of contraceptive (59.2%) respectively have significance levels of influence on the attitude of adolescent towards sexual practices.

Method

A quasi-experimental design was adopted because of the cause-effect variable.

E	O ₁	X	O ₂
C	O ₃		O ₄

- E = Experimental Group
- C = Control Group
- O = Observation
- X = Intervention/Treatment

Population of the Study

The target population of this study comprise of all the eight (8) mixed-senior secondary two (SS2) students in Ikpobal-Okha Local Government of Edo State

Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select two (2) schools from the eight (8) mixed schools in Ikpobal-Okha. Through simple random sampling by balloting. Forty participants were randomly selected, twenty for experimental group and twenty for the control group.

Research Instrument

A self-structured questionnaire, with a four-point liker scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree was adopted. The instrument was used to generate pre and post-test scores. The questionnaire was tagged “Attitude to Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire” (ASBQ), with two sections. Section A, sought information on respondent's personal data as follows: Students age, religious inclination and sex. Section B contains fifteen items which aimed at investigating the effect of group and individual counselling on the attitude of secondary school students towards sexual behaviour.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by two experts in the departments of Counselling Psychology of the Faculty of Education, University of Benin.

Reliability of the Instrument

A test-retest reliability of Pearson correlation coefficient method was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument and reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection

Permission was obtained from principals and heads of department of the selected schools to ensure effective administration of instrument. The students assented to join the study and participated in the teaching exercise (Control and Experimental groups) were contacted and the instrument was distributed to them. The responses were immediately retrieved from them. The experimental group were exposed to group counselling for four weeks, forty minutes every session while the control group was exposed to placebo on (drug abuse) for four weeks, forty minutes each session.

Method of Data Analysis

Hypothesis one will be analyzed using independent t-test, at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude towards sexual behaviour.

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis on the difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude towards sexual behaviour.

Variable	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t	Sig. (2 – tailed)
Exposed to group counselling	20	38.85	4.21	38	7.477	0.000
Not exposed to group counselling	20	27.10	5.63			

Table 1 shows that the number of students that are exposed to group counselling are 20 with mean = 38.85 and standard deviation = 4.21 while those not exposed to group counselling are N = 20, Mean = 27.10 and standard deviation = 5.63. The table also shows that df = 38, t=7.477 and p-value = 0.000

Testing the hypothesis at the alpha level 0.05 the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha value (0.05) thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between students that were exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude towards sexual behaviour.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one sought to find out if there is a difference between students exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude to sexual behaviour. The findings revealed that there was a significant difference between students that were exposed to group counselling and those not exposed to group counselling in their attitude towards sexual behaviour which means group counselling sessions held empowered and enlighten the students on sexuality education. This finding, agrees with the study of Amao Kehinde (2011) and Kariama (2013) who highlighted the importance of sexuality education to adolescents, to include: enlightening adolescent on sexuality issues and prevents them from developing sense of guilt, horror, disgust or fear, especially, when sex is to be performed at the right time for the right purpose and with the right person; knowledge of sexuality education help adolescents make quality decisions on sex-related issues.

By implication, the knowledge of sexuality education will help the students to learn about themselves as males and females; master their thought, feelings, attitudes and to compare and contrast with others their respective experiences. The knowledge of sexuality education is also important because it equips the adolescent with knowledge and dangers inherent in adolescent intimacy with partners and the experiences of pregnancy, birth and child rearing, thereby preventing teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and youth violence and at long run enhance healthy relationship in homes, society and social environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the finding of this study has revealed that, the students exposed to group counselling had a significant edge above those not exposed. The implication is that those exposed to group counselling are equipped with the requisite knowledge and attitude of handling sexual activities as teenagers as well as develop assertive communication skills to make well-informed decision(s). Which will in turn help them to harness appropriately their potentials and time toward a better academic achievement.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Secondary school students need counselling services to help them understand their bodies well as adolescent.
2. Creating awareness on sexuality education among students by school counsellor continuously will enable secondary school students make well informed decision on sexual issue.
3. Research study of this kind should be an ongoing process. Studies of this nature can help the general public and help prevent unwanted pregnancy in secondary schools and reduce the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.
4. There should be provision for employing more certified counsellors in secondary schools because preventive counselling will help the student make well-informed decision, if they are uninformed it could lead to making wrong decisions that could hinder/affect their educational pursuit.

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