

Effect of Interdisciplinary Collaboration on Effectiveness of Mental Health Counselling on Depressed Patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study included to evaluate the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients and to find out the differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 significant level guided the study. Sample comprised of 30 patients diagnosed with depression drawn through purposive sampling technique. Three stages were used in collecting data: pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment. Quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study. Two instruments were used, namely, the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) developed by Spitzer et al. (1999) and Mental Health Inventory-18 (MHI) by Veit & Ware (1983). Reliability of the instruments was established through test-retest; coefficients obtained were 0.82 and 0.78 for PHQ-9 and MHI-18 respectively confirming the instruments reliability for use in the study. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics. Results obtained revealed that interdisciplinary collaboration has effect on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients and that there was significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that government and educational institutions should provide support in form of sponsorship grants for interdisciplinary collaboration amongst researchers and that counselling support centres should be provided by the State government manned by professional counsellors to provide psycho-social support for clients needing help.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary collaboration, Effectiveness, Mental Health Counselling, Depressed Patients

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a very important issue in health care worldwide. It is a concept that is related the social and emotional well-being of individuals and communities. Mental health refers to an individual's emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how an individual thinks, feels and acts. It also helps to determine how people handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health as defined by World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) is 'a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'. Being mentally healthy is having the strength to overcome the difficulties and challenges, have confidence and self-esteem, be able to take decisions and to believe in oneself (Ruch, 2018).

Keyes (2014) identifies three components of mental health as emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being. Emotional well-being includes happiness, interest in life, and satisfaction; psychological well-being includes liking most parts of one's own personality, being good or managing the responsibilities of daily life, having good relationship with others and being satisfied with one's own life; social well-being refers to positive functioning and involves having something to contribute to society (social contribution), feeling part of a community (social integration), believing that society is becoming a better place for all people (social actualization), and that the way society works make sense to them (social coherence). Mental health issues can affect peoples' mental ability, energy level, happiness, optimism, dependability, concentration, sleep, etc. Mental health implies fitness rather than freedom from illness (Ayannuga, 2020).

Teibowei & Balogun (2022) and Denga (2015) opined that traumatic life experiences can have adverse effects on mental health. Persons going through life stress and difficult emotions such as the loss of a spouse or loved one, loss of a job, accidents, prolonged health issues, marital challenges, career issues and the like can develop depression symptoms which can affect mental health. Depression is a group of conditions associated with the elevation or lowering of a person's mood such as sadness (with or without crying), anxiety, lack of energy and or motivation, temper outbursts, easily irritated, sleeping too much or too little, little or no appetite, or eating too often, withdrawal from friends and family, loss of interest in activities usually enjoyed, feelings of fear (even if there is no conscious reason), feelings of extreme guilt or shame, inability to concentrate, poor memory, increased use of alcohol or drugs, worsening grades, skipping school or classes, self-critical remarks, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, suicidal thoughts etc. When four or more of the symptoms are observed or suspected for more than two weeks, an assessment by a mental health professional is necessary. Such professional assessment is done by a mental health counsellor or other professionals in related field by applying mental health counselling.

Mental health counselling technique is one of the most relevant counselling techniques in handling mental health problems. Mental health counselling is the use of variety of psychotherapy methods and techniques which are being used to help people experiencing psychological distress. Mental health counselling tends to view individual needs within a humanistic context, rather focusing on dysfunction, seeing problems as arising from normal reactions to developmental changes or as difficulty dealing with specific life stages. As a result, counselling may focus on personal development by helping clients learn skills and coping abilities they need to deal with such life changes and stages effectively (Lawan et al., 2023). Mental health counsellors are the professionals that specifically work with people dealing with cognitive, behavioural, and emotional issues. They not only master counselling skills and techniques but also understand the different theories that mental health professionals apply. Counsellors work with individuals, families, groups, and communities to deal with mental health issues and improve mental well-being. Professional mental health counsellors are expected to work in a wide range of settings, including mental health clinics, schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, private practices, colleges and universities, social service agencies and government agencies (Lawan et al., 2023; Sani et al., 2022; Diri, 2020). This corroborates the fact that mental health counsellors can work with professionals from other disciplines. More so, there are some instances when symptoms are so severe that more than one professional may be needed to provide care for the patient. This calls for interdisciplinary collaboration with other professionals to meet patient's needs.

Interdisciplinary collaboration is when multiple practitioners from different professional backgrounds work together with patients to deliver best results. Interdisciplinary collaboration involves integrating knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines to gain deeper insights into complex issues. In the context of studying depression, interdisciplinary

collaboration involves partnership between psychologists, sociologists, economists, physicians, psychiatrists and other experts as in the present study. Interdisciplinary collaborative counselling is partnership, a team effort, a meeting of the minds, and an opportunity to work together to achieve change, in all likelihood (Nielson et al., 2017; Grove, 2011). The partnership is vital for forming alliance between the collaborators as combined competencies and techniques support patients through treatment and help them reach their goal of overcoming the pressures of modern life and leading a more fulfilling existence (Newman, 2024). Leon & Lipuma (2024) added that interdisciplinary collaboration draws on knowledge from different disciplines, but each stays within its borders. This approach provides various perspectives to address complex, real-world problems by juxtaposing insights in parallel without integrating them, thereby enriching the analysis through diverse disciplinary lenses.

Tuomein (2022) conducted a study on interdisciplinary collaboration among the disciplines of social care, health care and education and found that interdisciplinary collaboration significantly corresponds to genuine inter-professional work life situations.

Hassan et al. (2023) carried out a study on developing shared understanding through online interdisciplinary collaboration: reflections from a research project on better integration of health outcomes in future urban development practice. The results showed that collaborative work is effective in enhancing shared understanding of a problem and providing a variety of shared solutions in tackling the problem.

Teibowei and Balogun (2022) conducted a study on the impact of collaborative counselling on psychological well-being of internally displaced persons and found significant relationship between collaborative counselling and psychological well-being of internally displaced persons. The study found that clients treated with collaborative counselling had increased chance of improvement from mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and loneliness. In a related study Liu et al. (2019) discovered that a substantial proportion of older persons who suffer from prolonged grief symptoms were able to improve substantially than younger persons when treated with collaborative counselling technique. This can be attributed to the fact when people work together as a team, more positive outcomes are expected as each team member contributes to the overall achievement of goals.

Teibowei (2025) conducted a study on efficacy of financial therapy intervention on financial stress and mental well-being of families in Yenagoa Metropolis. The study found that client age and gender contributed significantly to the mental health of client as the variables affected clients' reaction to stressful events and also development of coping strategies for stress. In a related study, Uzobo et al. (2022) studied Correlates of Adolescent Depression in Orphanage Homes in Yenagoa City and found that gender had significant influence on development of depression among adolescents, revealing that females suffer depression than their male counterparts.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that interdisciplinary collaboration is a *sin qua non* for solving a wide variety of issues. Despite its importance, not much research has been conducted in connection to different professionals collaborating in treating clients with mental health issues. It is to fill this gap that this study is carried out to evaluate the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness in mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. To evaluate the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

2. To find out the differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria?
2. What is the differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. Interdisciplinary collaboration does not have significant effect on the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quasi experimental design. A quasi experimental research design is not a pure or true experimental research as it lacks the key ingredient of random assignment. De-Rue et al. (2012) posit that quasi experimental design is used to estimate the impact of an intervention on its population without random assignment. Quasi experimental design, according to Shuttleworth (2018) is the most accurate form of experimental research in that it tries to prove or disprove a hypothesis mathematically with statistical analysis. Quasi experimental design is used in this study because it tries to prove or disprove a hypothesis mathematically with statistical analysis. The method used is the non-randomized pre-test post-test control group design.

Population of the study consisted of 183 patients diagnosed of clinical depression at Federal Medical Centre, Crest Consultancy Clinic and Stelmath Counselling Clinic, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A sample of 30 patients was selected through purposive sampling technique. The sample comprised of 24 females and six males. The instruments for data collection comprised of the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) developed by Spitzer et al. (1999) and Mental Health Inventory-18 (MHI) by Veit & Ware (1983) which were adapted and used for data collection. The PHQ-9 is a 9-item self-administered tool used to screen for depression and other mental health disorders. Major depression is diagnosed if five or more of the nine depressive symptom criteria have been present at least for two weeks. The MHI-18 made up of 18 items. The instruments are measured on a four point scale of 1 (Not at all), 2 (Several days), 3 (More than half the days) and 4 (Nearly every day) for the PHQ-9 and 1 (Strongly agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Disagree) and 4 (Strongly Disagree) for the MHI-18. The instruments were used both for pre-test and post-test. To ascertain validity, the instruments were scrutinized by three experts in Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education, Federal University Otuoke. To ascertain reliability, a pilot testing of the instrument was conducted with 10 patients diagnosed of depression in Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa who were not part of the sample. Test-retest method was used to obtain the coefficients (r). After an interval of two weeks, a second test was administered on the same 10 persons. The data was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The coefficients obtained were 0.82 and 0.78 for PHQ-9 and MHI-18 respectively confirming the instruments reliability for use in the study.

Treatment was done in three phases of pre-test, treatment and post-test. The pre-test phase consisted of informing participants about the essence of the exercise and administering

the two instruments to obtain their pre-test scores. The Treatment consisted of training sessions of two groups. Group 1 in charge of the experimental group consisted of the collaborators made up of a Neurologist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Physiologist and Counsellor while Group 2 in charge of the control group consisted of two Counsellors. Steps in the collaboration involved the following: Establish the nature and scope of the interdisciplinary collaboration; Draw on interdisciplinary insights; Integrate the insights from different disciplines to develop a shared understanding; and Establish the reason for carrying out the interdisciplinary study.

The treatment training focused on enhancing clients' capabilities by teaching them behavioural skills was carried out within 8 weeks (1 hour weekly) Individual / Group therapy as follows:

| Sessions | Training |
|------------|---|
| Week One | Therapist (s) starts with general introduction of group members, explains reasons for the group, assure confidentiality, explain treatment packages and administer pre-test. |
| Week Two | Meaning and advantages of mental health training |
| Week Three | Emotion regulation skills: deep breathing, relaxation exercises, cognitive reappraisal, distress tolerance. |
| Week Four | Self-awareness: identifying personal strengths, values, and triggers that can impact mental health/ Positive reframing: reinterpreting challenging situations to find potential opportunities for growth and learning. |
| Week Five | Problem-solving skills: developing strategies to address challenges proactively and identify solution / Social support building: recognizing the importance of a strong support network and fostering healthy relationships. |
| Week Six | Mindful practices: cultivating present-moment awareness to better understand and manage emotions / Self-care strategies: incorporating healthy habits like regular exercise, balanced diet, sufficient rest/sleep. |
| Week Seven | Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT): accepting thoughts and feelings while focusing on values and desired actions. |
| Week Eight | Wrap up, review, establish new targets, administer post-test. |

Note: Sessions were held in groups at times convenient for the group. Individual sessions were arranged for participants with issues of time constraint.

Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean score of Pre-test and Post-test effect of interdisciplinary collaboration on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

| Source of Variance | N | Pre-test Mean | Post-test Mean | Lost Mean | Remark |
|--------------------|----|---------------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| Experimental | 15 | 67.10 | 34.06 | 35.04 | Sig. |
| Control | 15 | 53.08 | 43.07 | 10.95 | |

Result from Table 1 showed that patients treated by combined team of Neurologist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Physiologist and Counsellor had Pre-test Mean Score of 67.10 and Post-test Mean Score of 34.06 with Lost Mean 35.04 in their mental health, while patients in the control group who were treated by the counsellors only had a Pre-test Mean Score of 54.60 and Post-test Mean Score of 43.07 and Lost Mean 10.9. The result indicates that interdisciplinary collaboration has effect on effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score on the differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

| S/N | Variable | N | Pre-test Mean | Post-test Mean | Lost Mean |
|-----|-----------------|----|---------------|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | Male Patients | 6 | 55.02 | 40.02 | 15.00 |
| 2 | Female Patients | 24 | 54.04 | 43.02 | 11.02 |

Table 2 shows that male patients had Pre-test Mean Score of 55.02 and Post-test Mean Score of 40.02 and Lost Mean = 15.00 while female patients had a Pre-test Mean Score of 54.04 and Post-test Mean Score of 43.02 and Lost Mean =11.02. The result indicates that there is differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It had more effect on male than female patients.

Hypothesis 1: Interdisciplinary collaboration does not have significant effect on the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Table 3: T-test analysis on effect of Interdisciplinary collaboration on the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | DF | t-cal | t-crit | Remark |
|-----------|----|-------|-------|----|-------|--------|-------------|
| Post-test | 30 | 65.45 | 17.52 | 28 | 3.67 | 1.96 | Significant |
| Pre-test | 30 | 41.52 | 13.18 | | | | |

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value of 3.67 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. This shows that there was a significant effect of Interdisciplinary collaboration on the effectiveness of mental health counselling of depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that Interdisciplinary collaboration does not have significant effect on the effectiveness of mental health counselling of depressed patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Table 4: T-test analysis on differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

| Variable | N | Mean | SD | DF | t-cal | t-crit | Remark |
|-----------------|----|-------|-------|----|-------|--------|-------------|
| Male Patients | 6 | 53.02 | 48.25 | 28 | 2.36 | 1.96 | Significant |
| Female Patients | 24 | 56.04 | 30.07 | | | | |

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 2.36 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96. This shows that there was a significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria is rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study based on research question one and hypothesis one indicated that there was a significant effect of Interdisciplinary collaboration on the effectiveness of mental health counselling of depressed patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that Interdisciplinary collaboration does not have significant effect on the effectiveness of mental health counselling of depressed patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria was rejected. The result showed that patients in the experimental group who were treated by the combined team of Neurologist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Physiologist and Counsellor improved significantly on their mental health than patients in the control group who were treated by the Counsellors only. The finding is in tandem with Tuomein (2022) who conducted a study on interdisciplinary collaboration among the disciplines of social care, health care and education and found that interdisciplinary collaboration significantly corresponds to genuine inter-professional work life situations. The finding also agrees with Hassan et al. (2023) who carried out a study on developing shared understanding through online interdisciplinary collaboration: reflections from a research project on better integration of health outcomes in future urban development practice. The results showed that collaborative work is effective in enhancing shared understanding of a problem and providing a variety of shared solutions in tackling the problem. The finding also corroborates with Teibowei and Balogun (2022) who conducted a study on the impact of collaborative counselling on psychological well-being of internally displaced persons and found significant relationship between collaborative counselling and psychological well-being of internally displaced persons. In the study, they found that clients treated with collaborative counselling have increased chance of improvement from mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and loneliness. The similarity of the findings with that of the present study could be attributed to the fact that team work produces better and faster output as it draws on knowledge from different disciplines thereby provides various perspectives to address complex, real-world problems enriching the analysis through diverse disciplinary lenses.

The findings of the study based on research question two and hypothesis two indicated that there was a significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa Metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria is rejected. The finding is supported by Teibowei (2025) who conducted a study on efficacy of financial therapy intervention on financial stress and mental well-being of families in Yenagoa Metropolis. The study found that client age and gender contributed significantly to the mental health of client as the variables affected clients' reaction to stressful events and also development of coping strategies for stress which contributed significantly to the mental health of client as the variables affected clients' reaction to stressful events and also development of coping strategies for trauma. In a related study, Uzobo et al. (2022) studied Correlates of Adolescent Depression in Orphanage Homes in Yenagoa City and found that gender had significant influence on development of depression among adolescents, revealing that females suffer depression than their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Interdisciplinary collaboration significantly contributes to the effectiveness of mental health counselling and that there is significant differential effect of the effectiveness of mental health counselling on depressed male and female patients in Yenagoa metropolis, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Government and Educational institutions should provide support in form of sponsorship grants for interdisciplinary collaboration amongst researchers.
2. Counselling support centres should be provided by the State manned by professional counsellors to provide psycho-social support for clients needing help.

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