



Awareness and Attitudes towards Mental Health Disorder: A Panacea to Inclusive Education among Secondary School Students in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study determined the awareness and attitudes towards Mental Health Disorder: A Panacea to inclusive Education among Secondary School Students in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The Study adopted descriptive survey design. The study population was 1,500 students and the sample size drawn was 390 students representing (26%) of the population through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection is adapted instrument named Types and sources of information on students awareness and attitude toward mental health disorder (TSISAATMHDQ) by Saidu and Gishiwa, (2019) whose original validity and reliability was 0.82 for the purpose of this study, the instrument was re-subjected to another validation process where the reliability and internal consistency was obtained at 0.81 via Cronbach's Alpha. Data obtained was analyzed using frequency and percentages to answer research questions while T-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant. The findings of the study revealed that 40% of the respondents had no information about mental illness in general, while a similar number (39%) indicate having same information. The study also revealed that most people with mental illness can get well and return to productive lives with treatment. Furthermore, the study shows that the mean score of students attitude (31.38) is greater than the mean score of students with negative attitude (28.69) towards mental health disorder in secondary schools. Based on the findings, it is recommended that training programmes should be provided to target population to improve their perception of mental health disorder. There is also need to organized workshops periodically in order emphasis on attitudinal change.

Introduction

Good mental health is the backbone of all round development of human personality. The more a society is blessed with greater number of citizens with good mental health the better for its progress (Bello & Abdullahi, 2010). The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013 revised edition) which state all round development and fulfillment of the individual learner as one of the Nigerian national educational goals recognizes the importance of good mental health as a vehicle for achieving the stated educational purpose. Guidance and Counseling services according to the policy was introduced into the educational system in view of, among other reasons personality maladjustment among learners.

The need for sound mental health among citizens of any nation is an important role in the overall well-being of any individual. The mental health of an individual determines their attitudes to other aspects of life. Mental health condition translate to a good life and vice versa. The Nigeria Health Wath (2020) stated that there are already 20 – 30% of the Nigerian population suffering from mental health issues.

Adolescents experience different mental health issues as they are transtrating from the stage of childhood to adolescence hood. Thus, the experience different mental health issues occasioned by the ir transition to adulthood as well as social influence.

The Nigerian psychiatric Association (2021) stated that adolescence includes people between the age of 10 to 18 but may sometimes cover does from 9 to 26 years depending on the environment or circumstance.

The American Psychiatry Association (2021) mentioned that mental health is the basis for an individuals emptions, thinking pattern, system of communication, method of learning system of resilience and self-esteem.

The mental health of a person also influence their relationships, personal and emotional well-being as well as contributes to the society at large. World Health Organization (WHO) (2019) mentioned that mental health conditions, such as depressions and anxiety account for 16% of the global burden of disease and injury among the world's 1.2 billion adolescents (aged 10-19 years). Adolescent also engage in gambling and other forms of vices which affects their mental health and influences their relationship with other members of the society negatively.

Mental health disorder has been reported as one of the challenges facing every country including Nigeria, with young people considered to be at risk. Evidence shows that mental health problems are common in adolescents, with approximately one in five experiencing some form of emotion disorder. Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin & Merkgangas (2015) found that 50% of all life long mental health disorder start by age 14 and 75% by age 24. Despite growing evidence of the importance of mental health to ensure social, economic and human capital, negative perceptions continue to be associated with mental health disorder and the associated mental health services and professionals (Sa'idu and Gishira, 2019). The public perceptions that people with mental health disorders cannot be employed or maintain their jobs, live independently or build long – term relationships is alarming (Sa'idu et al, 2019). According to them these misconception can impact an individuals living with disorder that results in poor follow-up care and recovery and further deepen the stigma and discrimination prognosis for mental health disorders can improve through early detection and intervention. Educating young people in Secondary Schools about health disorder affect their understanding of mental health but also make them to understand the family, friends and neighbours. Watson, Otey & Westbrook (2014) show that programmes aiming aim at increasing young people's knowledge of mental health through contact and education have shown positive results in reducing negative attitudes towards people with such disorders (Naylor, Cowie, Walters, Telamell, & Dawkins, 2009 as cited in Sa'idu et al. 2019).

Belfer, (2018) revealed that prejudice about mental health disorders was mainly due to ignorance and that people who are knowledgeable about such disorders are left likely to enforce negative attitude. Mahto, Verma, Singh & Chaudhary (2009) confirm that members of the public who have contact with persons suffering from mental health disorders are less likely endorse stigmatizing attitudes.

Education is therefore a strong tool for enhancing knowledge and reducing negative attitudes towards mental disorder (Bello et al, 2019).

Belfer, (2018) research on young people's views on mental health disorder show positive changes after exposure to educational programmes.

Children with varies degrees of disabilities present a significant social challenge, requiring special attention in the educational system. Professional experience with those children does not have a significant influence on forming or changing of the regular school teachers attitude toward inclusive education. The attitude in which inclusive education creates the basis for mutual impact on them and their peers is the firm concern of this study. These children who have learning difficulties, problems in behaviour, children with borderline in intellectual abilities attend regular schools, this affect their intellectual development due to lack of awareness and the attitudes of their peers toward them.

A handful of studies have explored attitudes among healthcare studies and the effectiveness of training programmes in various countries. However, there is a paucity of research in Northern Nigeria regarding awareness and attitudes of secondary school students towards mental health disorders. The current study therefore, aimed to explore the awareness and attitude of secondary school students towards mental health disorders, so as to indicate the need for attitude change programs before unhealthy attitude and beliefs become entrenched.

Methods

The design adopted for the study was descriptive survey design since the study investigated the existing phenomena population of the study consisted of 150 students from five public secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria. A sample size of 390 students (representing 26%) was selected through stratified random sampling technique. This consisted of 110, 76, 84, 66 and 54 students from the five public secondary schools.

The instrument for data collection was a 15 – item questionnaire titled “Types and sources of information and students' awareness and attitude towards mental health disorder questionnaire” (TSISAATMHDO). The questionnaire had three sections (A, B and C) with A obtaining their demographic data and B and C the sources of information and students awareness and attitude towards mental health disorders. The instrument was responded on a four point likert scales having weighted scores of 4,3,2 and respectively for the response scales. The instrument was face and content validation by two experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation, Federal College of Education, Yola. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument with an index of 0.87.

This value being considered an acceptable reliability coefficient for the study, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics of T-Test analysis.

Table 1: Sources of information about mental health disorders (n=390)

S/N	Types of information	None No. %	A little No. %	Some No. %	A lot No. %
1.	Mental illness in general	158 (40)	54 (14)	152 (39)	26 (7)
2.	How people cope with mental disorder	182 (47)	50 (13)	146 (37)	12 (3)
3.	Different approaches to help persons with mental illness	180 (46)	56 (14)	128 (35)	26 (7)
4.	What it is like to have a mental disorder	130 (59)	28 (7)	92 (24)	40 (10)
Grand mean		94 (49)	47 (12)	130 (33)	26 (6)

Cut off percentage = 50

Table 1 shows that 40% of the students had no information about mental illness in general, while a similar number (39%) indicate having some information. Almost half (47%) indicated having no knowledge of how people cope with mental illness, while less than half (37%) claimed to be informed. On the different approaches to help persons with mental illness, the majority 46% has no idea, while a third (33%) has some information, only a few (10%) indicated that they know what it was like to have a mental illness, while almost half (59%) had no idea. In terms of the overall mean score regarding their knowledge about types of information, the 61% (None and A little) had little or no information, while 29% had some information about mental disorders.

Table 2: Attitude towards mental health disorders

S/N	Item	Strongly Agree No. %	Agree No. %	Disagree No. %	Strongly Disagree No. %
1.	Most people with a serious mental illness can, with treatment, get well and return to productive live	76 (20)	228 (59)	48 (12)	38 (9)
2.	In most cases, keeping a normal life in the community helps a person with mental health get better	48 (12)	130 (33)	140 (36)	72 (19)
3.	People with mental illness are far less of a danger than most people believe	36 (9)	112 (29)	154 (40)	88 (22)
4.	Living near the home of a person with mental illness does not endanger life	52 (12)	94 (24)	140 (36)	104 (27)
5.	People with mental illness are, by far more dangerous than the general population	82 (16)	176 (45)	80 (21)	72 (18)
6.	Mental health facilities should be kept out of residential areas	72 (18)	194 (50)	50 (13)	74 (19)
7.	Even if they seem okay, people with mental illness always have the potential to commit violent acts	54 (14)	246 (62)	54 (14)	40 (10)
8.	It is easy to recognize someone who once had a serious mental illness	32 (8)	174 (45)	120 (31)	64 (16)
9.	The best way to handle people with mental illness is to keep them behind locked door	52 (13)	152 (39)	86 (22)	100 (26)
10.	People that have mental illness are responsible for their illness	70 (18)	76 (20)	110 (28)	134 (34)

Source: Field 2024

Table 2: Shows that (79%) of the students agreed that most people with mental illness can get well and return to productive lives with treatment. Less than half (45%) agreed that the community helps people with mental illness get better on the other hand (62%) disagreed that people with mental illness are far less of a danger than most people will believe. On third (37%) agreed that living near the home of a person with mental illness does not endanger life and nearly two thirds (61%) agreed that people with mental illness are more dangerous than the general population. The majority (68%) agreed that mental health facilities should be kept out of residential areas and three quarters (76%) agreed that people with mental illness have the potential of committing violent crimes. Half (55%) agreed that it is easy to recognize someone who once had a mental illness and a similar number (52%) agreed that people with mental illness should be locked away. Two thirds (66%) strongly disagreed that people with mental illness were responsible for their illness. The total mean implies that, 55% of the participants has positive attitude towards mental disorder.

Table 3 (n=390)

Table 3: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation scores of students with positive and negative attitudes toward mental health disorders.

Variables	N	x	SD
Students with positive attitude	214	31.38	2.350
Students with negative attitude	176	28.69	2.818
	390	30.17	2.895

Table 3 shows that the mean score of students with positive attitude (31.38) is greater than the mean score of students with negative attitude (28.69) towards mental health disorder in secondary schools. Consequently, upon the slight difference observed in the means, they were subjected to a t-test analysis in order to ascertain if the difference is significant.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between students with positive and negative attitudes towards mental health disorders among secondary school students.

Table 4: t-test for the difference between students with positive and negative attitudes towards mental health disorders.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	T-cal	p-value	Decision
Students with positive attitude	214	31.38	2.35				
				193	7.27	0.000	Reject
Students with negative attitude	176	28.69	2.82				

Significant at $p < 0.05$ alpha level; $N = 390$

Table 4 shows that the calculated value of 7.270 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.960 at 0.05 alpha level with 193 degrees of freedom. The alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant difference between students with positive and negative attitudes towards mental health disorders in secondary school, is upheld.

Discussion

The study investigated awareness and attitudes towards mental health disorders: A panacea to inclusive education among secondary school students in Adamawa State, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that secondary school students have access to various forms of information about mental health issues. The information obtained contributed to the students' attitudes and awareness about the disorder. This finding agrees with Watson & Westbrook (2014) who reported that providing correct information about mental health disorders helps in reducing fear, myths, and negative beliefs that some people have about such disorders. The Canadian Centre for Addiction and Mental Health confirmed that programmes aiming at increasing young peoples' knowledge of mental health through education have shown positive results in reducing negative attitudes towards people with these disorders. Thus, education is therefore a strong tool for enhancing knowledge and reducing negative attitudes towards mental health disorders. The results also showed that majority of the respondents derived information about mental health disorders from their teachers and the print media, followed by movies, friends and family members which contributed to their attitudes to mental health disorders.

This finding corroborates the reports of previous studies by Brown (2008) who reported that teachers, peers, parents, news bulletin, health workers, print and electronic media could be the main sources of information. It was also revealed that programs aiming at increasing young peoples' knowledge of mental health through information have shown positive results in reducing negative attitudes towards people with mental health disorders.

The findings may not be unconnected with the fact that, improving the understanding of secondary school students about mental health disorders will not only affect the disorders who are enlightened but also the society in general.

The findings also agree with the similar study carried out by GUO, Yand, Liu and Li (2020) on the awareness rate of mental health knowledge among Chinese adolescents and it was indicated that mental health knowledge was an average of 66% among the respondents. The study also revealed that the rate of awareness in developed regions was more than the less developed regions. The findings are also inline with Sweta'a Gayathri and Priya (2019) showed that mental health was a major health issue affecting 19% of adults as well as 46% of teenager and 13% of children. To this end, educational programmes need to target this receptive population in the knowledge that improving their perceptions of the diseases will ensure a stronger societal destigmatization of mental health disorders as they develop in adults.

Conclusion

Since the study revealed the presences of both positive and negative attitude towards mental health disorder, it is therefore concluded that we should address negative attitudes through training intervention.

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