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**Assessing Rehabilitation Counselling as a Tool
for the Psychological Adjustment of Persons
with Disabilities Infected with HIV/AIDS: A Case Study
of Vom, Christian Hospital, Plateau State, Nigeria**

**Posúdenie rehabilitačného poradenstva ako nástroja
na psychickú adaptáciu osôb so zdravotným postihnutím
infikovaných HIV/AIDS: Prípadová štúdia realizovaná
v nemocnici Vom, Christian Hospital,
Plateau State, Nigéria**

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Abstract

Being a person with disability and having HIV/AIDS is a serious concern. A lot of changes need to take place in order for adjustment to be smooth. Adjusting to this sort of condition may require the service of a rehabilitation counsellor, hence this study sought to assess the existing relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS. There were more males than females in the study and the age-range of the respondents was between 20-62 years. The study was analyzed using simple percentage in describing the data gotten from the survey. The study found an existing relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities who are infected with HIV/AIDS. Also, the study explored other major aspects and challenges of PWDs infected with HIV/AIDS such as negative attitudes of the society, inadequate employment and availability of rehabilitation counselling for PWDs infected with HIV/AIDS. In summary, the rights of person with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS ought to be respected and their dignity preserved through the provision of rehabilitation counselling.

Keywords: Persons with disability. HIV/AIDS. Rehabilitation counselling. Psychological adjustment. Nigeria.

Introduction

Rehabilitation Counselling is a profession whose objective is to help persons with impairments reach their full physical, mental, social, occupational, and economic independence (Parker et al. 2004). Rehabilitation counselling is also seen as a specialty that focuses on the effects of disability on people's psychological, interpersonal, and environmental well-being (Patterson et al., 2005). The focus of rehabilitation counselling services is on the person's holistic character within an ecological setting rather than the functional limits of a chronic disease or disability designation. A holistic and ecological approach considers a person's physical, mental, and spiritual components, as well as his or her relationship to his or her family, schoolwork, and the whole environment. People are viewed as more than individual components; that is, they are not split into easy categories such as physical, mental, psychological, cultural, and economic in order to undertake an assessment. Rehabilitation counselling emphasizes on the assistance or helping of persons who have disabilities achieve their personal, career and independent living goals through a counselling process. Rehabilitation counsellors can be found in private practice, in rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, universities, schools, government agencies, insurance companies, half-way homes, foster care homes and other organizations where people are being treated for congenital or adventitious (acquired) disabilities (Goodwin, Jr., 2006). The specific techniques for rehabilitation counselling for persons with disabilities includes i) Assessment and appraisal ii) Diagnosis and treatment planning, iii) Career (vocational) counselling, iv) Individual and group counselling interventions focused on facilitating adjustment to the medical and Psychological impact of disability, v) Case management, referral and service coordination and vi) Program evaluation and research (Schaumburg, 2022). Rehabilitation counselling enables people to cope and adjust to real life situations. In Nigeria, due to the lack of academic structure for the rehabilitation counselling field, the practice of rehabilitation counselling for persons with disabilities is largely carried out by guidance counsellors, special education professionals, psychologists, and other mental health profession (Esere, 2020; Ndum & Onukwugha, 2013). According Esere (2020), Guidance and Counseling professionals provide rehabilitation counselling to person with disabilities – they are provided with understanding and clarity on how they can achieve independence, self-determination and be mentally prepared to handle challenges.

Psychological adjustment to any form of disability or disease entails not only the avoidance of mental health problems, but also the development of resilience and personal growth. Psychological adjustment to a disability, disease or both is a dynamic process influenced by a variety of internal elements, interpersonal interactions with friends and family, and systemic and sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic position (Revenson, Llave & Hoyt, 2022). A sufficient understanding of the occurrences

and psychological changes that have taken place as well as personal acknowledgement of these changes; an appropriate adjustment of self-perception; a reconfiguration of beliefs and personal goals; and the acquisition of appropriate strategies to compensate for any disability of negative condition depends on the psychological adjustment made by the affected individual. Psychological adjustment entails the restoration of personal, familial, and social ties, both close and distant. In all of these settings, it may also include vocational adjustments and reinterpretation of personal responsibilities (Larsen, 2011). This is something that the rehabilitation counsellor must understand and be capable of helping with. And be aware that psychological adjustment to chronic conditions is rather a progressive change than static experience (Larsen, 2011).

Persons with disabilities make up 15% of the global population, or one billion people, with the majority living in developing nations and being over-represented among those living in abject poverty (World Health Organization & The World Bank, 2011). In recent years, it is reported that the population of persons with disabilities in Nigeria is increasing with about 7% of the entire population having one form of disability or the other. Generally, it is estimated that there are over 25 million persons with disabilities in Nigeria including children (Thompson, 2020). On a daily basis, people with disabilities face prejudice and marginalization (High-level Political Forum, 2016; Thompson, 2020). In some quarters in Nigeria, persons with disabilities are perceived as those who are under curse. These perceptions has denied persons with disabilities the access to equal rights to essential services and programs aimed at improving their lives (Kolawole, 2016). Persons with disabilities, in particular, are more likely than their peers without impairments to face negative socioeconomic results, such as less access to education, poorer health outcomes, and greater poverty rates (Etieyibo, 2020; Kolawole, 2016). Beliefs and biases obstruct education, employment, health care, and social social involvement for persons with disability. Teachers', school officials', other children's, family members' opinions including negative attitudes of other members of the society, for example, influence the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; Del Carmen Malbrán, 2011). Employers' misconceptions that persons with disabilities are less productive than their non-disabled peers, as well as misunderstanding about potential work-related adjustments, limit job chances (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016).

The term "HIV" refers to the human immunodeficiency virus, which is a virus that attacks the human immune system. HIV infection can be avoided with the right precautions. "AIDS" refers to the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome caused by advanced HIV infection, which is characterized by opportunistic infections or HIV-related malignancies, or both (International Labour Organization, 2009). HIV/AIDS is a health and labor rights issue that has a major influence on the workplace, impacting employees

and their families, employers, and national economies, particularly in those places where the HIV incidence remains the greatest. According to Be-in-the-know (2022), about 1.9 million persons in Nigeria are infected with HIV/AIDS with about 1.3% being adults. Out of this prevalence, there are about 74,000 new HIV infections and 51, 000 AIDS-related deaths. Despite this alarming stats, 1.7 million people are on antiretroviral treatment which can prevent aid-related mortality, thereby increasing the lifespan of infected persons if all factors remained constant. Well over thirty years after the initial HIV incidence was identified, HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace remains a serious impediment, robbing employees of basic human rights and undermining the effectiveness of HIV preventive initiatives thereby affecting their psychological adjustment (International Labour Organization, 2009).

It is no news that persons infected with HIV/AIDS faces tremendous challenges in almost all facets of their life Endeavour's especially in developing countries. Many studies have found a high incidence of unemployment among people with HIV/AIDS with some reporting rates of unemployment among people with HIV, with more reporting rates of employment at 50% or higher (Fleishman, 1998). The high level of social stigma associated with HIV/AIDS has been widely recognized ever since the outbreak of this disease. Consequently, people with HIV/AIDS often must contend with widespread discrimination across all aspects of their lives (Smith & Sullenger, 1995). The negative attitudes, lack of availability of services, problems with service delivery, inadequate funding, lack if accessibility, poor health outcomes, low economic participation, restricted participation and increased dependency are many of the challenges or barriers bedeviling persons with disabilities who are infected with HIV/AIDS (Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; World Health Organization & The World Bank, 2011). Several Literature have captured the importance of rehabilitation counselling on various issues in human life including disability matters (Counselling Today, 2012 Armstrong, A.J. (2011), however, Much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of person with disability with a co-morbidity of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, this study is a case study survey of the relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS in Vom Christian Hospital, Plateau State, Nigeria. The study explored several aspects of persons with disabilities such as their employment, significance of, access to/and availability of counselling services, societal attitudes towards PWDS, as well their how they adjust psychologically to their situation.

This study is supported by the social model of disability and the convention on the right of persons with disability. The social model of disability argues that persons with disabilities are limited primarily due to society's attitudinal, structural and environmental influence (Andrews, 2017).

This model further argues that prejudices, discrimination and social abandonment exacerbate the challenges of individuals with disabilities. Being a person with disability and having HIV/AIDS is a double tragedy and hence the challenges would be numerous especially the social barriers heralded by the society. To be able to handle these challenges and remain strong in the face overwhelming societal barriers, rehabilitation counselling for the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities is explored in the study. Consequently, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) explains that every human, regardless of their physical, social, financial, and psychological status, reserves the right to equal enjoyment and fundamental freedoms, which is aimed at promoting respect and human dignity (United Nations, 2006). The CRPD also highlights that persons with disabilities are people with any long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which may prevent full participation in society on an equal level as other persons without disabilities. The CRPD framework supports implementing the fundamental human rights of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS. It will be interesting to see how the fundamental human rights of is preserved and how persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS are empowered through rehabilitation counselling.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the survey research design which involves descriptive statistics that describes the positions of variables under study for the purpose of achieving its objectives. The design is selected in agreement with Awotunde and Ugodunlunwa (2004), who described survey research as that which is conducted to examine the sample population for the purpose of making descriptive and explanatory assertions about certain traits and attributes of the population being represented. The research population of this study comprises only persons with HIV/AIDSs having one particular type of disability or the other in the Aids prevention initiative in Nigeria (APIN) department in Vom Christian Hospital (VCH). the sample for this study consists of 30 respondents which comprises of 20 persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDSs, and 10 staffs which consist of rehabilitation counsellors, social workers, nurses and physicians of the hospital. Vom Christian Hospital is a rural missionary hospital in Plateau State that meets the fundamental requirements of the local population by providing land for farming, a school, staff housing, and a mission office. The simple random sampling technique was used in this study. Simple random sampling is a subset of a statistical population which each member of the subset has equal probability to be chosen. The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire. The structured questionnaires are designed by the researcher to obtain information from the respondents. Ethical approval was obtained

from the department of special education and rehabilitation science, the head of the hospital and the consent of the respondent was taken as well. Method of data analysis for this study includes the use of simple percentage and descriptive statistical.

Results

Socio-demographic Characteristics

Distribution of the questionnaire according to gender (male/female) shows that in this study, total 17 male responded to the questionnaire culminating into 57% of the distribution while 13 female responded resulting to 43% of the distribution, thereby giving the sum total of 100%. About 4 persons who responded to the questionnaire falls within the age of 20-28 (13%) years, 20 respondents fall within the age of 29-36 (67%) years and 6 respondents were aged of 37 (20%) years. Overall, only 30 respondents were used for this survey. In this study, there were more male participant than female.

Employment of persons with Disability infected with HIV/AIDS

About 54% of the respondents in this study agreed that being a person with disability infected with HIV/AIDS strongly and negatively affects their employment while 46% of the respondents in this study disagreed that being a person with disability infected with HIV/AIDS does not affects the their employment.

Availability of rehabilitation Counselling for persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS

To ascertain that rehabilitation counselling services are available for HIV/AIDS infected persons with disabilities, More than half (58%) of the respondents in the study agreed that there are various available rehabilitation counselling services for HIV/AIDS infected persons with disabilities across Nigeria, although they believed these services were provided in schools, hospitals and disabled people's organizations, while 38% disagreed that there were limited or no available rehabilitation counselling services for persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS.

Societal attitudes towards the adjustment of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS

Again, majority (90%) of the respondents in this study agreed that societal attitudes negatively affect the psychological adjustment process of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS, while very few respondents in this study (10%) disagreed that societal attitudes does not have any affect the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS. Also, about 66% of the respondents in this study agreed that there is the existence of a psychological adjustment for every person with disability who are also infected with HIV/AIDS patients, while 41% of the respondents reportedly disagreed that there is no existence of psychological adjustment of persons with disability who are infected with HIV/AIDS patients.

Discussion

This was survey research explained using simple descriptive percentages carried out to assess the relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of persons with disabilities who are also infected with HIV/AIDS. This study also addressed the several aspects of the respondents lives such as employment, availability of counselling services and societal attitudes towards persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS.

There are more males, 53.6%, than females in the study. This is inconsistent with a similar study carried out in the Kingdom of Bahrain by (Fateel, 2019) where the researcher carried out a case study research to find the impact of psychological adjustment on the academic performance of university students, In that study, it was reportedly mentioned that more females (57.9%) participated in the study. Respondents' age in the study ranged from 20-65 years old, with the average age being 39.8%. The average age of this study is similar to that of Xiong & Zhou, (2018) in their study where they examined the Understanding of east Asian graduate students' socio-cultural and psychological adjustment in a U.S. Midwestern university. The age of the respondents in their study ranged from 25-41 years.

Employment of persons with Disability infected with HIV/AIDS

One of the main points of this study is how persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS can psychologically adjust to their present situation through rehabilitation counselling in order to be gainfully employed. Albeit, more than half (55%) of the respondents in the study reported massive setback in employment because of their present predicament. Being a person with disability infected with HIV/AIDS negatively affects their employment thereby

leading to long-term financial dependence. This is corroborated by studies conducted by Boman et al. (2015); Etieyibo (2020) and Etieyibo & Omiegebe (2016), where they found that despite employment being a right for persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS, there is a greater challenge in getting employed as well as the incessant discrimination faced by some who are employed. When employers have applicant with disability, they tend to pay attention on the disability of the clients rather than the ability, skills and qualification of the applicant and ensuring they provide enabling environment for modification and accommodation of the applicant with disability infected with HIV/AIDS.

Availability of rehabilitation Counselling for persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS

For persons with disability infected with HIV/AIDS, there is a lot of changes that occurs in their daily lives ranging from family re-organization, career development, livelihood, social interactions, and general involvement in happenings in the society. For them to go through these changes, there is a need for psychological adjustment; these psychological adjustment services are provided by rehabilitation counsellors. The problem is, are there rehabilitation counselling services available for persons with disabilities who also infected with HIV/AIDS and are they also able to access these services. In view of these uncertainties, it is encouraging to record that more than half (58%) respondents in this study reported that rehabilitation Counselling services are available, and they can access these services, although these services are provided in educational institutions, hospitals and non-governmental organizations working with persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

This finding is consistent with the studies of Esere (2020); Goodwin, Jr. (2006) and Ndum & Onukwugha (2013), where they highlighted the services of rehabilitation counsellors for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and also techniques as well as places where these services rehab are provided were also captured in their studies. It is interesting to note that, rehabilitation counselling is readily available for persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, although these services are made available in limited areas.

Societal attitudes towards the adjustment of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS

One of the age-long challenges of the persons with disabilities include the negative societal attitudes expressed towards them. These attitudes have the potential to impede the adjustment process of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria and across the globe. This malignant attitudinal behaviour of the society is also well captured in this study as

majority (90%) of the respondents in this study reportedly mentioned that the negative attitudes of society greatly inhibit their psychological adjustment process. In the same vein, several studies (Eleweke, 1999; Eleweke & Ebenso, 2016; High-level Political Forum, 2016; Kolawole, 2016; Thompson, 2020), have expressed that the society has a disability and that is the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities infected HIV/AIDS especially in low-and-middle-income-countries including Nigeria. One of the reason for the protracted and increasingly expressed poor attitudes of the society towards person with disabilities in a developing country like Nigeria is the deep-rooted practice of culture (Jaeger, 2019). Also, the lack of awareness and orientation about the skills and positive contributions of persons with disabilities to the growth and development of the society is a major factor for the continued experience of social exclusion, discrimination and abandonment. Due to this weakness in society, the psychological adjustment of persons with disability captured in this study appears to be a struggle.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this study and analysis drawn from the data collected, the following recommendations are of greater importance.

Government at all levels should enact policies backed by laws and agencies that will eventually fight for and protects the rights of persons with disabilities and to also kick against discrimination in the employment of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Government at all levels, non-governmental organizations as well as concerned person should engage in creation of awareness about the abilities of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS, organize seminars, workshops, symposium and Programmes in various communities in other to change the perception and attitude of the community members towards persons with disabilities infected HIV/AIDS.

A system that monitors and encourages employers to look beyond the conditions of the applicants with disabilities and instead see their capabilities, character, competence, and qualifications.

There should be provision of adequately trained counsellors and para-counsellors in the field of rehabilitation sciences to help in the management of HIV/AIDS persons with disabilities.

Establishment of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) Programmes in the communities where there are persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS should be facilitated especially with the aim of providing employment, equal opportunity, and active participation in the society.

Conclusion

The main objective in this paper is to assess the relationship between rehabilitation counselling and the psychological adjustment of person with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS in Vom Christian Hospital, Plateau State Jos, Nigeria. In doing so, several challenges and aspects were captured such as the employment problems, societal attitudes and availability of rehabilitation counselling. The study revealed impediments to the psychological adjustments of persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. From this study, for persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS to fully adjust their present situation, a rehabilitation counselling service is needful. This is because as shown in the study, rehabilitation counsellors are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills to empower persons with disabilities infected with HIV/AIDS to completely adjust to the unpleasant situation while also helping them with competencies needs to be employable. This study is a case study which used respondents in a particular hospital because the persons with disabilities who also have HIV/AIDS are not ubiquitous either due to lack of data or perhaps due to lack of presentation in hospitals and other agency responsible for their wellbeing.

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