

IMPACT OF COUNSELLING INTERVENTION ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THEIR PECULIAR INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENT, MAKOKO, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT

The challenges posed by the adverse environmental pollution cannot be overestimated especially as regards its impact on the resilience and psychosocial well-being of the residents. There is no disputing the fact that as murky and waterlogged as the Makoko environment is, it is the children's indigenous environment. This paper investigated the impact of group counselling on the resilience and psychosocial well-being of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment. It examined the children's perception of their environment as well as their attitude towards the inclement pollution with reference to their level of resilience and interpersonal relationship. The study adopted the quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test research design. Intact classes were used for the study. A researcher-made questionnaire was used by the researchers to gather data to test the two null hypotheses. A total of 106 randomly selected school children participated in the study. Paired sample t-test statistical tool was used to determine the level of resilience and interpersonal relationship of the participants. Results showed that group counselling impacted significantly on their level of resilience and interpersonal relationship. The study recommends regular counselling interventions to enhance the rapid growth, development and psychosocial well-being of Makoko school children in their indigenous environment.

Keywords: Resilience, Psychosocial well-being, Interpersonal relationship, indigenous environment.

INTRODUCTION

The growth and development of any nation depends a lot on the quality of education which cannot be attained in the absence of suitable well-being of the school child. In other words, both the psychological and sociological well-being of the school child must be the pivot of the decision making bodies. Child well-

being includes quality of life in a broad concept. It is related to child economic conditions, peer relations, political right and development opportunities (Ben-Arieh and Frones (2007a). Therefore child well-being is a multi-element in combination with psychological, social and physical well-being. Well-being is usually described as people quality of lives.

The last three decades have witnessed international interest in indigenous knowledge as an important contributor to plans for sustainable development and environmental conservation in African communities but most of these studies have only concentrated on perfunctory aspect of the subject as a mere environmental coping tool to the neglect of works of impact of psychosocial wellbeing of school children in their peculiar indigenous environment.

Child well-being is a conglomeration of physical, psychological, social and cognitive well-being. According to Moore (2011), psychological well-being means the mental and emotional status of individual (children thought about their present, future and how they handle and cope with situations) while social well-being refers to how well a child is able to get along in the social ecology or in social relationships. It includes the basic social skills and ability to relate emotionally to people.

It is noted with dismay that environments like home, school, and community where children live most of their meaningful experiences have become unsafe places for many of them. The pathetic side is that emotional support is often lacking in these areas, and many children and adolescents are left alone to cope with their difficulties (Shechtman, 2014). Between 17% and 22% of children and adolescents have serious developmental, emotional, or behavioral problems (World Health Organization, 2001). These statistics show the number of children who are not diagnosed with a special problem, but go through traumatic experiences such as family breakdown, death, war, and world disaster, is on the rise.

Kolawole (2015) described Indigenous Knowledge as the knowledge acquired through experience and practice. The Indigenous Knowledge System also refers to the set of interaction between the economic, ecological, political, and social environments within a group or groups with a strong identity, drawing existence from generation to generations to cope with change. These patterns are sustained by micro level institutional arrangements vested with differentiated responsibilities that ensure the group's continuous survival. According to Warren

(1991), it is the knowledge used by local people to make a living in a particular environment. In the main, such knowledge evolves in the local environment, so that it is specifically adapted to the requirements of local people and conditions. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of psychosocial well-being of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment.

The study area (Makoko) is one of the 43 large blotched slums identified in Lagos (Fig. 1), and has been classified as one of the 9 largest slums in the city. The total area of space coursed by this settlement cannot be easily estimated as residents continue to build and encroach on the water body as population increases (Habitat 2007). Makoko is characterized by adverse environmental condition otherwise known as urban slum (see appendix for Makoko pictures). Below is the Map of Yaba Local Government area council showing Makoko.



Fig. 1: Map of Yaba Local Government area council showing Makoko

Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Yaba-Local-Government-area-council->

The physical conditions of many slum settlements pose a significant threat to health and well-being. According to UN-Habitat (2012) while slums vary significantly by degree of poverty and deprivation, slum households can be described as those households, which lack one or more of the following characteristics also known as shelter deprivation.

- Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.

- Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
- Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
- Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
- Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

Social, health, and educational services are often not easily available to slum residents in Sub-Saharan Africa, either because such services are not located in the slums, because documentation required to access services is lacking or because the financial and opportunity costs of accessing services is high (UN-Habitat 2012). Children born in slum settlements are not always registered at birth and are therefore often not able to access formal educational institutions setting instead for privately-run local schools or staying out of school altogether (UNESCO 2010). In many slums, the majority of institutions and services that are available to residents are provided by non-governmental organization (NGOs) and community-based organization (CBOS).

Makoko slum is in itself a threat to human existence due to its dilapidated conditions. For decades, the inhabitants have no access to infrastructure ranging from clean drinking water, electricity, and waste disposal, which has created severe environmental hazards to the residents and surrounding aquatic life. Communal latrines are shared amongst households and the wastewater flows straight into the water they live on. The oily black water resulting from increased waste disposal over the years no longer supports marine life. Efforts by the government to displace the people in the past years have been futile as it creates a bigger problem of relocating the homeless people. Residents believe that Makoko is their only culture and thus should be preserved by the government.

While socially the slum dwellers often experience severe deprivation and social exclusion. Underlying this research is the level of resilience and the level of interpersonal relationship of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment. Tolen and Dodge (2005) emphasize that health services for children are in crisis and suggest a more practical approach to address the situation. Some of the issues children contend with are resilience and inter personal relationships. Resilience is described as the ability to respond, to perform positively in the face of adversity, to achieve despite the presence of disadvantage, or to significantly exceed expectations under negative circumstances (Guilligan, 2007). Resilience is defined as:

- i. The capacity of individuals to navigate their ways to resources that sustain well-being.
- ii. The capacity of individuals' physical and social ecologies to provide those resources; and
- iii. The capacity of individuals, their families and their communities to negotiate culturally meaningful ways to share resources

McElvee (2007) stated that resilience characteristics may be grouped into three categories: individual characteristics such as flexibility and a positive attitude; social bonds such as an effective relationship with parents and other adults; and social support such as socially acceptable patterns of behavioral norms.

Researches have also shown that the quality of the home environment is associated with children's health, competence, and adaptive functioning. According to Bradley (2006), in order to assure well-being for children parents must: (a) provide for their safety (b) provide sustenance and other health-promoting supports, (c) foster socio-economic competence, (d) provide stimulation and supports for learning, (e) monitor their activities (f) supervise their behaviour, (g) provide routines, guidance and directions that give structure to daily life and ongoing activities, and (h) provide social connections to key persons and institutions that facilitate the child's adaptive functioning and long-term productivity. In Makoko, many households continue to live in poor housing conditions, where they lack a supportive nurturing environment and adequate housing. Hence, need to be resilient.

A lot of researches have shown that resilience, autonomy and sense of mastery are the components of psychological well-being (Jane-Llopis, 2008). Psychological well-being helps people bounce back from life's difficulties by enhancing protective factors, reducing inequities and ameliorating risk factors for poor mental health.

On the other hand social well-being focuses on issues like interpersonal relationships and citizenship (Jane, 2008). Positive interpersonal relationship especially among students, will aid better academic achievement. According to Ormrod (2010), positive peer or friendship in school can promote to get better academic achievement. While citizenship will enable them to make a contribution to the world they live in strengthening of self-confidence and preparing them to enter adult world in future.

The fact is that school counsellors are usually the ones to carry the load of services provided to children in need, but the ratio of one counselor to a large number of students inhibits the systematic provision of emotional assistance to students (Shechtman, 2014). Group counseling has been recognized by professional agencies (e.g. ASCA, 2003) as a viable means to address children's social and emotional needs in the school. Group counselling is a type of psychotherapy that involves meeting with a group of individuals with similar concerns. It involves sharing experiences and listening to others experiences.

According to Olusakin and Ubanga (1996) several problems whether vocational, educational or personal-social can be tackled through effective use of group counseling since "counseling is for all". Everyone needs counseling (children, adolescents, adults and the aged) are not left out. Any problem that is common and cut across an age group or group of persons will be better handled with the use of group counseling. Omoegun (2009) opined that group counseling is better for adolescents since they can freely express their conflicting feelings, self-doubts and question their values and opt for amendments when there is need for such. Despite this, much of what are known about group work is based on adult groups. This is a big gap because children have unique developmental needs and operate differently.

Some scholars have carried out rigorous research on the effectiveness of using group counseling with children (Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack, 2007). Shechtman & Leichtentritt (2010) carried out a study on effect of group counseling on externalizing and internalizing behaviour where about 250 children participated in 40 small counselling groups. The population included children exhibiting a mixture of severe externalizing and internalizing symptoms. The researchers used adjustment and anxiety measures, as well as academic achievements were used to measure outcomes. In their findings, pre-post differences were significant on all four measures. Children treated in the counselling sessions showed a reduction in externalizing and internalizing with a decrease in anxiety and improvement in academic achievements.

Sarig (2011) involved about 200 adolescents with a mixture of adjustment difficulties, who were treated in 29 small groups led by counseling trainees. They used Y-OQ (Burlingame, Wells, Lambert, & Cox, 2004) to measure their progress following treatment. Results indicated a significant reduction of symptoms following group counseling. The outcomes of these studies suggest that the counseling groups encouraged the children to strive harder despite their

environmental challenge and experience of adversity. Therefore, this study is conceived to assess the impact of group-counseling on psychosocial wellbeing of children in Makoko.

Statement of the Problems

Legum (1960) in Adebisi (2008) opined that ‘Benin is a city divided, not against itself, but within itself.’ “...the warring selves are the old and the new. There is much that is new in the old and even more that is old in the new” (pg, 108 - 9).

This conflict between the old and the new within societies is not peculiar to Benin City alone, but applies to Lagos-Makoko community as well as other cultures of the world. Cultural interactions bring conflicts between the old and the new, most especially, in impacting through indigenous knowledge. The development of western political, economic and cultural realities and postmodern educational methodologies the growing disillusionment of Africans with the promises of the modern “Western” science; coupled with the impact of the nineteenth century social science in establishing negative values and attitudes towards indigenous knowledge systems created grounds for Public abandonment of indigenous knowledge system. Colonial education system replaced the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning with Western ideas of theoretical knowledge and academic ways of learning.

Moreover, Shiva (1993) opined that the introduction of “modern” commercial agricultural technology from West displaces or even eliminates the local practices (indigenous knowledge) in favour of modern practices such as mono-cropping (simplification of ecosystems for so-called easy and “efficient” practices). This has led to the degradation of natural resources, poorer nutrition and loss of informal channels of communication; whereas, Indigenous knowledge systems, have broad perspectives of the ecosystems and sustainable ways of using natural resources.

Since Indigenous knowledge is considered as the social capital of the poor and their main asset to invest in the struggle for survival and education is a major key for development and survival; this study therefore, investigates the impact of psychosocial well-being of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment, Makoko, Lagos.

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the impact of group counseling on the psychosocial well-being of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores on level of resilience of the students exposed to group counselling
2. There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores on level of interpersonal relationship of students exposed to group counselling.

Method

The study is an experimental research. Quasi experimental research design was adopted, while Pre-test/Post-test design was specifically used for the study. Group counselling technique was the intervention used and intact classes of (106) one hundred and six secondary school students in Makoko, Yaba Local government formed the participants in the study. To generate relevant data, a self-designed questionnaire tagged “Impact of Counselling Intervention on the Psychosocial Well-being Questionnaire” (ICIPWQ) was the instrument used for data collection in order to assess the level of resilience and interpersonal relationship of Makoko school children in their peculiar indigenous environment. The instrument has two sections A and B. Section A consisted items seeking information on the participants bio-data namely age, gender and class. Part B has two sections: Section 1 has 10 items measuring the level of resilience; Section 2 comprised 10 items measuring interpersonal relationship. Participants were to respond on a 4 point Likert-type scale that ranges from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Agree. Validity of instrument was done by giving the questionnaire (ICIPWQ) to experts who made necessary corrections to ensure face and content validity. Paired sample t-test statistical tool was used to determine the level of resilience and interpersonal relationship of the participants. While administration of treatment namely group counseling was embarked on for three sessions (pretest, administration of the therapy and posttest).

Findings

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and posttest mean score on level of resilience of the students exposed to group counselling.

Table 1: t-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Resilience

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	Mean Gain	t-calc	Sig
Pre-Test	106	25.42	3.45			
				4.29	6.48	0.000
Post-Test	106	29.72	5.55			

Sig @ $p < 0.05$

The results presented on Table 1 showed that the mean test score of the participants' resilience before the treatment was 25.42 while their mean test score after the treatment was 29.72 with a mean gain of 4.29. The difference between the pre-test and post-test was found significant ($t = 6.48, p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies the treatment using group counselling contributes meaningfully in influencing the resilience of the participants.

The t-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Resilience is graphically illustrated in Fig. 2 below:

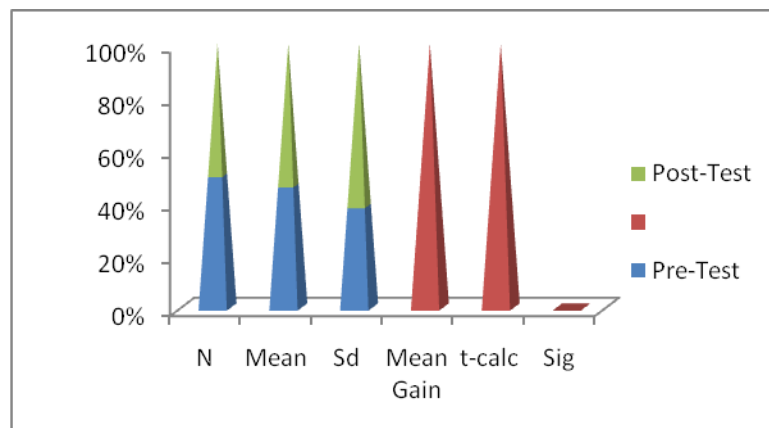


Fig. 2: t-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Resilience

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test mean scores on level of interpersonal relationship of students exposed to group counseling.

Table 2: t-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Inter Personal Relationship

Variable	N	Mean	Sd	Mean Gain	t-calc	Sig
Pre-Test	106	22.50	3.60			
				2.21	5.63	0.000
Post-Test	106	24.66	2.21			

The results presented on Table 2 showed that the mean test score of the participants' inter-personal relationship before the treatment was 22.50 while their mean test score after the treatment was 24.66 with a mean gain of 2.21. The difference between the pre-test and post-test was found significant ($t= 5.63$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies the treatment using group counselling contributed meaningfully in influencing the inter-personal relationship of the participants. The t-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Inter Personal Relationship is graphically illustrated in Fig. 3 below:

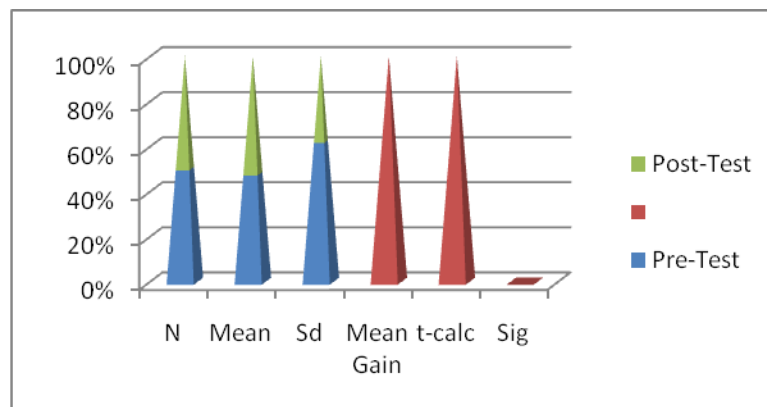


Fig. 3: T-test for difference in Pre-Post Test scores of Students' Inter Personal Relationship

Discussion of Findings

The results of the hypotheses tested showed that group counselling was effective in influencing the participants' level of resilience and inter-personal relationship. This finding agrees with Gerrity & DeLucia-Waack (2007), Shechtman & Leichtentritt (2010) and Sarig (2011) who found significant effect of group counseling on participants' belief, perception and behaviour. Makoko is characterized by adverse environmental condition otherwise known as slum. The intervention helps students to build confidence; feel good about their future, try their best in the school, engage in self-motivation, relate well with their friends and families despite the nature of their environment that is not conducive. It

builds determination and strong will that despite their physical limitation, they can still relate well and succeed to defile all odds.

Conclusion

This paper has surveyed the Makoko community and has found out the impact of group counselling on the psychosocial well-being of the school children in their peculiar indigenous environment. It has shown that impact of counselling cannot be over emphasized in reshaping the level of resilience and interpersonal relationship of school children in their peculiar indigenous environment. Literature had shown that socio-economic characteristics of the residents, quality of life and environmental situation of the study area are at the mercy of government and have little or no power to alleviate their present situation. Results show that use of a group counselling programme in Makoko increases the quality of life that is, with counselling intervention, the interpersonal relationship is boosted and their level of resilience is upgraded.

Recommendations

There should be adequate provision of materials and infrastructure (counselling rooms) in all Makoko schools. Students should be encouraged to access guidance and counselling services to enhance their holistic development. This has a positive effect on the development of vocational, interpersonal study and problem solving skills. The number of required counsellors to attend to students' needs should be prioritized.

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APPENDIX



Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Makoko-an-example-of-slum-of-houses-on-stilts-in-central-Lagos-Nigeria>



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/452893306250302686/>