
Strategic Assessment of Modern Counseling Skills and Techniques for Mitigation of Sexual Abuse in Households in Nigeria

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to assess modern counseling skills and technique for mitigation of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria. Given the high numbers of sexual assault crimes that occur within the general population, it is important that counselors have an adequate understanding of working with this population. Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised school counselors and social scientists. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 140 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Modern Counseling Skills and Technique, and Sexual Abuse in Households Questionnaire (MCSTSAHQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded that most people who are sexually abused are scared and do not want to go to a counselor for help and guidance making the influence of counseling on the eradication of sexual abuse and rape low. The study also went further to recommend that counselors should seek for more training on the best techniques to use to help sexually abused and raped victims.

KEYWORDS: Modern Counseling Skills and Techniques, Sexual Abuse, Rape, and Households

Introduction

Counseling is about creating strong relationships with your clients that will empower them to obtain mental health and to fulfill their goals. Through the use of intentional counseling skills/techniques and an understanding of human nature developed through counseling theories, you can guide your client in reaching optimal mental health. Counseling skills and techniques are the strategies and methods the counselors use to communicate strongly with their client making it easy and possible for the counselors to help them out of their distresses. Counseling skills are well said to have various forms and examples which will well be explained in the study.

It is estimated that about one third of sexual abuse survivors never tell anyone about the abuse, possibly because of shame (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Some individuals who have been sexually abused may fear seeking counseling services due to the belief that mental health professionals will be unable to meet their treatment needs (Draucker, 1999). Nevertheless, nearly 50% of people who have been sexually abused eventually obtain mental health services (Koss & Harvey, 1992). Counseling these clients can be complex, full of both challenges and rewards.

Statement of the problem

Given the high numbers of sexual assault crimes that occur within the general population, it is important that counselors have an adequate understanding of working with this population. In our population today, rape and sexual abuse among siblings and relatives due to selfish desires and lust is observed. The sexual abuse done by close ones and relatives are quite seen to be very devastating, causing tumors and hatred to the victim. These victims are well so expected to be going through a lot and need help greatly from counselors. The study therefore aimed to assess modern counseling skills and technique for mitigation of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to strategically assess modern counseling skills and technique for mitigation of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To examine the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria.
2. To find out the level of rape incidence in Nigeria.
3. To determine the appropriate modern counseling skills used in curtailing incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria.
4. To find out the extent in which the modern counseling skills have helped in lessening sexual abuse in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria?
2. What is the level of rape incidence in Nigeria?
3. What are the appropriate modern counseling skills that can curtail incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria?
4. What is the influence of modern counseling skills in the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Modern Counselling

Prasantham (2018) has rightly pointed out that, "Counselling is a relationship between the counsellor and counsellee characterized by trust and openness, in a one to one, or a small group relationship, whereby the counsellee is helped to work through his interpersonal and or intrapersonal problems and crisis. Effective counseling can make a significant, positive impact on clients' lives. Some positive outcomes might include: Better decision making; Coping skills; Improve outlook on life; Ability to plan for the future (e.g. career preparedness); Improve socialization with peers, teachers, and family; and Engagement with extracurricular activities.

According to the American Counseling Association External (ACA), professional counseling is the process of building relationships with individuals that empower them to accomplish mental health and wellness, education, and career goals. It is a collaborative relationship between the counselor and their client. Professional counseling can take the form of: Individual counseling, that focuses on the growth and mental health of an individual; Couples or marriage counseling focuses on assisting couples in overcoming conflict and working towards a stronger relationship; Family counseling involves different familial dynamics and how they affect family structure; and Group counseling is the use of group interaction to facilitate growth.

Types of Modern Counseling

Ramsay (2019) has rightly pointed out that, "Counseling is a relationship between the counselor and counsellee characterized by trust and openness, in a one to one, or a small group relationship, whereby the counsellee is helped to work through his interpersonal and or intrapersonal problems and crisis. According to Vicky (2020), the following are the types of counseling:

Directive Counseling: Under directive counseling, the counselor issues certain instructions to the counsellee or he is directed to do certain things e.g. he is asked to behave in a particular manner, asked to abstain from alcohol or drug, asked to respect his colleagues and superiors.

Non Directive Counseling: Under non directive counseling counselor does not issue directions but observe the behaviour and attitude of the counsellee towards his work and his colleagues and superiors and subordinates. If he errs then counselor comes to his rescue and corrects him realizing him that he was wrong. He will not issue him any instructions or will not direct him.

Cooperative Counseling: This is a kind of counseling that can be done through extending full cooperation to the counsellee and makes him realize his mistakes relating to his behavior and attitudes so that he himself will be back on the track and improve him. It is winning the heart of the counsellee through cooperation. His confidence will be won by the counsellee and he in turn will extend his cooperation and become self-disciplined.

Marital and Family Counseling: Employees need counseling in respect of marriage and family problems. The troubled employees can discuss out their problems with the counselor who can take them into confidence and prescribe solutions for their ills.

Concept of Effective Modern Counselling Skills

Kevin (2020) also posits that although there is nothing which will ensure change, it would appear that clients are more likely to achieve their goals when a good and positive relationship exists between them and their therapist. In essence the counselor's interactions with the client are a powerful tool in the helping relationship. According to Kevin (2020), the modern counseling skills include:

Listening/Observing: Listening is one of the most valuable counseling skills in the therapeutic relationship. It means giving them your undivided attention and making appropriate eye contact, mirroring body language, and nodding. Active listening occurs when you are listening with all of your senses. According to the Perinatal Mental Health Project, active listening involves listening with your body, heart, ears, and eyes.

Asking Questions: Questions are helpful in the therapeutic environment because they allow you to learn more about your client. The type of questions that you ask will set the tone of the session and the entire counseling process. Closed questions should generally be avoided in the counseling relationship, as they do not encourage deeper exploration.

Reflection: Reflections are used in the counseling process to accurately describe the client's state from their verbal or nonverbal cues. Reflection takes the form of:

Feelings reflections: Reflections allow clients to hear the feelings they have just expressed. Sometimes you have to look for the descriptive feeling in a client's statement. It can also be helpful to look at a client's nonverbal feeling cues.

Restating/Rephrasing: Restating and rephrasing can build a stronger client therapist relationship. Rephrasing a client's statement allows you to better understand what a client has just said and to gain further clarity, if you have gotten it wrong.

Affirmation: Affirmation is a form of encouragement that is used to affirm behaviors or life choices. Affirmation is important for empowering clients.

Empathy: Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes. It is much more than sympathy in that you are able to show your understanding of your clients feeling surrounding an experience.

Genuineness: Being genuine is creating congruence between yourself and your words. Every therapist is different and will provide a different therapeutic process. It is important to remain genuine in all counseling techniques and verbal and nonverbal cues.

Unconditional Positive Regard: Demonstrating unconditional positive regard is the idea of accepting your client for who they are. It is a means of expressing warmth and respect.

Counselor Self-Disclosure: This is a tricky counseling skill to maneuver. A general rule to follow is to only share personal information that is beneficial to the therapeutic process. It might also be used to help the counselor relate better with their client.

Concept of Sexual Abuse

A wide range of sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings. Apart from physical force, it may involve psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats. It may also occur when the person aggressed is unable to give consent. For instance, while drunk, drugged, asleep or mentally incapable of understanding the situation. Sexual abuse includes rape; defined as physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration – even if slight – of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or an object. Sexual violence can include other forms of assault involving a sexual organ, including coerced contact between the mouth and penis, vulva or anus. Forms and contexts of sexual abuse include, for example:

- sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people;
- sexual abuse of children;
- denial of the right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases;
- Violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity.

Concept of Rape

The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) provides a current definition of rape that encompasses aspects of definitions from other authors. The NIBRS currently defines forcible rape as “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim,” by engaging in sexual intercourse with a person who is not legally able to provide consent due to a permanent or temporary disability or intoxication or by having sexual intercourse with a person who is under the legal age of consent (Kilpatrick, 2004), or through threat of injury (Mitchell & Rogers, 2003) or coercion (Bachman & Taylor, 1994). Attempted rape is an unsuccessful attempt to complete an act that would fall under the definition of rape (Bachman & Taylor, 1994; Kilpatrick, 2004). However, there are many rumoured or even reported cases of men who have been raped in contemporary societies, including Nigeria.

Concept of Household

According to Bagarani, Forleo, and Zampino, (2009), a household comprises either one person living alone or a group of people, who may or may not be related, living (or staying temporarily) at the same address, with common housekeeping, who either share at least one meal a day or share common living accommodation (ie a living room or sitting room). Resident domestic servants are included. Members of a household are not necessarily related by blood or marriage. A household is distinct from the less inclusive category of family. Households may contain one or two or more nuclear families within them, but also household members other than members of the nuclear family, such as more distant relatives, friends, foster-children, lodgers, flat mates or long-stay guests or visitors (Bozoglu, Bilgic, Yen, and Huang, 2013).

Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Nigeria

Child sexual abuse in Nigeria is an offence under several sections of chapter 21 of the country's criminal code. The age of consent is 18 (Ezeamalu, 2015). UNICEF (2015) reported in 2015 that one in four girls, one in ten boys, and six out of ten children in Nigeria experience emotional, physical or sexual abuse before the age of 18, with half experiencing physical violence. According to a survey by Positive Action for Treatment Access, over 31.4 percent of girls there said that their first sexual encounter had been rape or forced sex of some kind (Is'haq 2013). The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development reported that 1,200 girls had been raped in 2012 in Rivers, a coastal state in southeastern Nigeria (Is'haq 2013). For instance, a poll conducted by NOIPOLLS in July 2019, revealed that most Nigerians (85%) believe that there is a high prevalence of rape in Nigeria. This is a worrying situation!

With current campaigns against rape and other forms of sexual abuse in the country, the state needs to rise to the occasion and deal with it. Apart from the creation of Sex offenders Registers, which even though commendable but is technically deficient without a national database containing information of every citizen and a national criminal record system. Secondly, the handling of reported cases by the police in some situations has discouraged many victims of rape from coming forward. There is need for such cases if charged to court to be given a quick hearing, thereby restoring confidence in the mind of victims. If rapists are caught, tried and jailed in time, it can serve as a form of deterrence to future offenders (Reliefweb, 2020).

Modern Counseling Skills and Mitigation of Sexual Abuse

According to Stone (2012), in the busy lives of counselors there are those “drop-everything-and-attend” moments. Counselors are required by law to act quickly to prevent possible future victims, to protect the society from legal liability and to provide support for sexually abused victims. As counselors, focus must be on guiding victims with the time, space, and autonomy needed to bring them to the point where victims chooses to involve their parents, therefore, safeguarding the trusting relationship by breaching in the least intrusive way.

Averred by Kress, Trippany, and Nolan (2003), those who present for treatment soon after experiencing a sexual abuse often are not ready to engage in treatment that requires an intense level of involvement. In the acute phase (Phase 1) of trauma, victims of sexual abuse are often unable to answer detailed questions about the abuse or make meaning of the incident. This phase lasts until the person reaches the reorganization phase (Phase 2), in which survivors experience some level of psychological readjustment, integration of the experience, and ultimately, recovery from the abuse. While in the acute phase, it is helpful for the counselor to be active, directive, and supportive of the client, in addition to educating the client about possible sexual abuse symptoms (Kress, Trippany, & Nolan, 2003). Another way to reduce symptoms in clients who have been sexually abused is to validate the courage of survivors who do come forward to discuss the abuse with a counselor (Kardatzke & Murray, 2007). Empowering clients to make their own decisions can also be beneficial to clients, as it leads to increased self-confidence (Kardatzke & Murray, 2007).

Mental health counselors need special training in order to work with clients who have been sexually abused. As mentioned above, some individuals are reluctant to receive counseling services after being sexually abused. Murphy, Moynihan, and Banyard (2009) indicated that one reason for the reluctance to seek services is the notion that mental health providers are

not knowledgeable about sexual abuse, and may provide insensitive services as a result. According to Campbell and Wasco (2005), 25% of clients who have been sexually abused identified their experiences with mental health professionals as hurtful. Moreover, nearly 58% of mental health professionals feel that providers conduct practices that would be harmful to clients, and were unsure of the levels to which clients benefit from seeking mental health services after a sexual abuse (Campbell and Wasco 2005). One of the issues surrounding competent services in the area of sexual abuse is training (Kitzrow, 2002). Campbell and Wasco (2005) provide a summary of the eight goals of counselors regarding sexually abused victims. These eight goals are as follows: Initiate contact in a non-intrusive, helpful manner; Enhance safety and provide physical and emotional comfort; Calm and orient emotionally distraught survivors; Identify immediate needs and concerns and gather information; Offer practical help to address immediate needs and concerns; Reduce stress by connecting to primary support persons; Provide individuals with information about stress reactions and coping; and link individuals to services and inform them about services they may need in the future. (Campbell and Wasco 2005)

The above goals are designed to reduce the likelihood of a person developing post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression after experiencing an act of abuse, and to increase the quality of a person's life on a long term basis. Because these techniques have been successful in assisting people in traumatic situations, Campbell and Wasco (2005) suggested that these techniques also be used with people in the immediate aftermath of a sexual abuse. Rape crisis centers often serve this function for victims of sexual abuse.

Method

Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised school counselors and social scientists. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 140 respondents which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Modern Counseling Skills and Technique, and Sexual Abuse in Households Questionnaire (MCSTSAHQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results and Discussion

Research Questions 1: The research question sought to find out the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria. To answer the research, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	103	42.92**
HIGH EXTENT	78	32.5
LOW EXTENT	36	15
VERY LOW EXTENT	23	9.58*
TOTAL	240	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (42.92%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria is very high while the least percentage (9.58%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of sexual abuse in Nigeria is very low.

Research Question 2: The research question sought to find out the level of rape incidence in Nigeria. To answer the research, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the level of rape incidence in Nigeria

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	77	32.08**
HIGH EXTENT	63	26.25
LOW EXTENT	56	23.33
VERY LOW EXTENT	44	18.33*
TOTAL	240	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the level of rape incidence in Nigeria. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (32.08%) of the respondents affirmed that the level of rape incidence in Nigeria is very high while the least percentage (18.33%) of the respondents stated that the level of rape incidence in Nigeria is very low extent.

Research Question 3: The research question sought to find out the appropriate modern counseling skills that can curtail incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria. To answer the research, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 3).

Table 3: Percentage analysis of the appropriate modern counseling skills that can curtail incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria

COUNSELING SKILL PERCENTAGE	FREQUENCY	
Listening/Observation	64	26.67**
Asking Question	50	20.83
Reflection	44	18.33
Empathy	21	8.8
Genuineness	32	13.33
Unconditional Positive Regard	16	6.67
Counselor Self-Disclosure	13	5.42*
TOTAL	240	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 3 presents percentage analysis of the appropriate modern counseling skills that can curtail incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the tagged listening and observation 64(26.67%)” rated the highest percentage while counselor self-disclosure 13(5.42%) rated the least percentage of the appropriate modern counseling skills that can curtail incidence of sexual abuse in households in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: The research question sought to find out the influence of modern counseling skills in the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the influence of modern counseling skills in the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	R	Remarks
Sexual Abuse	240	14.25	12.5	0.86*	* Strong to Perfect Relationship
Counseling		11.50	12.5		

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the influence of modern counseling skills in the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. The two variables were observed to have Strong to Perfect Relation at 86%. The arithmetic mean for sexual abuse (14.25) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards counseling (11.50) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is remarkable influence of modern counseling skills in the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria

Hypotheses 1: The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. In order to test the hypothesis, regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 5).

Table 5: Simple Regression Analysis of influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.86a	0.73	0.73	1.08	0.73

***Significant at 0.05 level; df= 238; N= 240; critical R-value = 0.139**

The above table 5 shows that the calculated R-value (0.86) was greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.5 alpha level with 238 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.73 predicts 73% of the influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that influence of modern counseling skill on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. It was also deemed necessary to find out the influence of the variance of each class of independent variable as responded by each respondent (see table 6).

Table 6: Analysis of variance of influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	752.77	1	752.77	648.56	.000b
Residual	276.23	238	1.161		
Total	1028.00	239			

a. Dependent Variable: Sexual Abuse

b. Predictors: (Constant), Counseling

The above table presents the calculated F-value as (648.56) and the P-value as (000). Being that the P-value (000) is below the probability level of 0.05, the result therefore means that there is influence exerted by the independent variables counseling on the dependent variable which is Sexual abuse.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the data analysis in table 5 and 6 was significant due to the fact that the calculated R-value 0.86 and F- 648.56 were greater than the critical R-value of 0.139 at 0.05 alpha levels with 238 degree of freedom. The result implies that there is influence of modern counseling skills on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Beckerman (2003), sexual abuse is clinically and legally defined as “forced or inappropriate sexual activity [including] situations in which there is sexual contact with penetration [rape] or without penetration that occurs because of physical force or psychological coercion”. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative was accepted.

Conclusion

Most people who are sexually abused are scared and don't want to go to a counselor for help and guidance making the influence of counseling on the eradication of sexual abuse and rape low. The modern counseling techniques which can be adopted by counselors in addressing sexually abused victims include: listening/observing: counselor self-disclosure, asking questions, reflection, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness. The study also concluded that there is significant influence of modern counseling technique on the mitigation of sexual abuse in Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Counselors should seek for more training on the best technique to use to help sexually abused and raped victims.
2. Proper training should all be given to the people about the consequences of sexual abuse.
3. Victims of sexual abuse should be encouraged to meet a counselor for guidance and advice.

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