

Effects of Individual Counseling on Social Adjustment of Registered Widows in Rivers State of Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of individual counseling based on social adjustment of registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria. The Rational Emotive Therapy and Clients Centered counseling techniques were used in counseling the registered widows for social adjustment. Four research questions and four null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The study population was made up of all the registered widows in Rivers State. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 60 registered widows who were understood the purpose of counseling. The research instrument was administered easily. The 60 widows were placed in 4 groups of 15 subjects each: 3 experimental and one control group. The pre-test post-test quasi experimental design was adopted for the study. The adapted social adjustment scale (ASAA) was used to collect data from the subjects. The reliability of ASAS was established using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, and it yielded a coefficient of "r" 0.86. Data was analyzed using Independent t-test for the first three hypotheses and ANOVA for the fourth hypothesis. Results indicated among others that individual counseling techniques based on RET and CCA led to significant remediation of social adjustment problems among registered widows in Rivers State.

Counseling is a universal service for all people, irrespective of race, color, creed, and language. It is often misconstrued as a service for schools and children. This belief is erroneous as it is meant for diverse individuals and groups in diverse settings on diverse issues, who by nature, condition, or circumstances may be subjected to a series of problems that need solutions like the widows. The death of a spouse is for many the most devastating experience in life. Holmes and Rahe (1967) rated death of a spouse as the most stressful life event people undergo, and this affects their level of adjustment socially and otherwise. Most widows find ways of adjusting to the loss, for others it may be too difficult without additional support. Some widows manifest some behaviors which are inimical and detrimental to their existence. These behaviors do not enhance the maintenance and actualization of the potentials of the individual (widow) within the society she lives.

Calkin (2001) observes in bereavement literature, terms such as shock, denial, distress, realization, resolution, bond, growth, equilibrium, grief, etc. are summary labels for various behaviours that are observed after the death of a loved one. The summary label "grief" for example includes behaviours such as crying, feeling sad, worrying, having a memory of a shaved event, behaving angrily, etc. When such behaviours are exhibited, social maladjustment is bound to set in. An individual who is socially maladjusted can not relate well with others or co-exist amicably with others. Talking and relating friendly with people bother them. They tend to be hostile, aggressive, easily irritated, and lose their temper without any justifiable reason. When a great grief comes, there is the tendency to retreat into oneself. Grief can make for "indifference", unwilling to see colour in anything, goodness in any person, disconnecting from the world, and taking to the bed. When a widow is socially adjusted, most of these reactions can be averted. It is against this background that this study was carried out.

Statement of Problem

Widows are a part and parcel of the Society we live in. They are supposed to co-exist amicably with others, relate, and cordially work with others. The situations around widows make them social deviants (socially maladjusted). They withdraw from interacting with people around them due to societal hostility towards them. In Africa, they are often accused of being responsible for their husband's death and given treatment. This calls for counseling services to be rendered to them for proper adjustment so they can carry on with life like every other person in society. This study used two counseling techniques, Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) and the Client Centered Approach (CCA), to investigate the individual and combined effects of RET and CCA in an individual counseling setting for the improvement of social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of RET, CCA, and a combination of RET / CCA in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State in an individual counseling situation. Specifically, the study was aimed at achieving the following to:

- Determine how effective RET is in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows.
- Determine how effective CCA is in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows.
- Determine how effective the combination of RET and CCA is in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows.
- Find out the most effective counseling method among RET, CCA, and a combination of RET /CCA in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows.

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated to guide the investigation.

- How effective is RET in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pretest and post-test mean scores?
- How effective is CCA in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pretest and post test mean scores?
- How effective are the combined effects of RET / CCA in enhancement social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pretest and post test mean scores?
- What is the most effective counseling method in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pre-test and post-test mean scores? RET? CCA? A combination of RET/ CCA?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to give bearing to the study and were tested at 0.05% level of significance.

- There is no significant difference in the social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with RET and that of the control group.
- There is no significant difference in social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with CCA and that of the control group.
- There is no significant difference in the social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with RET / CCA and that of the control group.
- There is no significant difference in the social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with RET, CCA, and a combination of RET / CCA.

Scope of the Study

The study was carried out in Rivers State of Nigeria. Specifically, the geographical scope of this study covered Port-Harcourt City where widows were dully registered at the Women Development Centre located in Port-Harcourt. With regard to content scope, the study covered the way in which Rational Emotive Therapy and Client Centered Counseling techniques were used in counseling the registered widows in Rivers State to enhance social adjustment and were delimited to individual counseling. It equally utilized a control group for comparison.

Literature Review

Literature related to this study was reviewed empirically and theoretically on RET, CCA, widowhood, and social adjustment. RET and CCA counseling models have been proved to have a high level of success in improving people's life socially, academically, psychologically, and otherwise. Olta and Odoemelam (1999) conducted an experimental study among 28 physically challenged secondary school students in Afikpo Urban of Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State utilizing RET and CCA to improve self concept. The result showed the experimental groups with individual and combined treatment factors had an improved self concept over the control group which had no counseling. The study also revealed that RETS and CCA were effective. None of them was significantly more effective than the other.

Eniola and Adebisi (2005) conducted an experimental study among 48 visually impaired students in Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo utilizing RET and Reality therapy in improving socialization problems using 3 x 2 x 2 factorial matrix. The results revealed that RET subjects socialized significantly better than all other subjects. The difference between the mean scores of the group receiving Reality therapy and the control group did not reach significant level.

Ker, Ekoja, and Ekoja (2007) also conducted an experimental study in Benue State University for 2004/2005 Session post graduate students. They used a sample size of 60 students made up of 39 males and 21 females with a mean age of 36 years. They used RET to improve voters' attitudes. The results showed the treatment factors of RET produced a significant mean difference between the experimental and control groups in favor of the former. The control group maintained consistency in their demonstration of apathy greed / selfishness and non-cooperation while the experimental group did not.

Nwosu (2007) conducted an experimental study consisting of 30 truants aged 9 to 14 years old from primary 4 to 6 classes from 3 urban public primary schools in Akwa South Local Government Education Authority of Anambra State. He used individual counseling. The results indicated among others that individualized counseling techniques led to significant remediation of truancy in children. Neely (1982) used CCA with other therapeutic approaches to manage unassertiveness and emotionally disturbed students. He found them very effective. The treatment group with CCA improved over the control group. Broedel, Ohlem, Proff, and Southhand (1960) used RET and CCA in their research to improve under-achievement among gifted adolescents. They found the mean scores of the treatment groups and the control group to be significantly different in favour of the experimental group. Several cross-sectioned studies have suggested marriage is protective, and that widowhood, divorce, and separation are detrimental to health

behaviours and social mal-adjustment (Rosenbloom & Whittington, 1993; Schone & Weinick, 1998).

Eze and Nnamani (2004) conducted a survey to determine the health implication of widowhood practice in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State using a sample size of 150 widows from 6 randomly selected communities in the study area. The result revealed there are some obnoxious widowhood practices in the area that have left many widows in perpetual sorrow, withdrawal from others that constituted serious health hazards to them.

Denga (1991) noted social adjustment is a personality trait. While some people cordially work with others, talk, and co-exist amicably with others; other people want to be on their own. Talking and relating friendly with people bother them. Baker and Sirkyk (1983) noted those who relate with others very well get along cordially, peacefully, and cheerfully are said to be socially adjusted. Such people enjoy contacts with others and wish to participate in social and group activities without being prompted to do so. The results of the reviewed works assisted the current study in assessing the effects of individual counseling on social adjustment of registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

The pre-test, post-test quasi experimental control group design was adopted to establish the effects of individual counseling on the social adjustment of registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Population

The target population of the study comprised all the registered widows in Rivers State numbering 5600 by the submission given to government at inception in 1998 when it was formed.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size was drawn from the committed and dedicated members of the association for purpose of ease of accessibility of members for counseling and administration of instrument. Only 60 registered widows were drawn for the study. The choice was purposive. The purposive sampling technique was used to achieve this representation. The 60 widows were randomly placed into four groups of 15 subjects each: three experimental and one control group.

Instrument for Data Collection

The Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) developed by Denga (1991) was adapted and renamed Adapted Social Adjustment Scale (ASAS). Thus, certain items on the instrument have been modified, replaced, or left as they were. All items are designed to tap the proneness or

propensity of adjustment problems as it relates to widows. The instrument had two sections: Part A had a Personal data of two items and Part B consists of 30 self report items. All items are statements concerning social interaction, social participation, and social affiliation. For scoring, the values, 4, 3, 2, 1 were respectively assigned to the 4 point values from the positive to the negative end.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to close scrutiny by test experts and those from the field of Guidance and Counseling to ensure that both content and face validities were obtained. Particularly, close attention was given to the relevance of the items with regard to the research questions and hypotheses. Thus, the items were framed and reframed. Thereafter, the suggestions for improvement were incorporated into the final draft which was used for the study.

Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was established by employing the test retest method. The instrument was administered on 20 widows who were not registered in Rivers State. The period of interval between the first and second administration was 3 weeks. The Pearson product moment correlation was employed to find the relationship between the two sets of scores (the first administration and the second administration). This gave a co-efficient value of “r” – 0.86 which was accepted to be high for utilization.

Administration

The face to face method that implies administering the instrument personally or through an assistant was used for the purpose of explaining further terms that may not be clear to the respondents. The pre-test was administered after the formation of all the counseling groups while the post-test was administered after the counseling process. The interval between the first and second administration was twelve weeks.

Data Analysis Procedure

The four research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test scores where the mean scores of the experimental and control groups were compared. For the first three hypotheses, a t-test was used to compare the significance of the difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control group. The one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for the fourth hypothesis to determine the significance of the difference of the post-test mean scores of the three experimental groups (RET, CCA, and RET / CCA).

Results

The results are shown below with appropriate tables indicating pre-test and post-test scores.

Research Question 1: How effective is RET in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Table 1
Registered Widows in RET Group Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

Pre-test mean scores				Post-test mean scores			
Group	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>
RET Experimental Group 1	15	49	6.5	15	82	10.5	33

The post-test mean score of 82 is much higher than the pre-test mean score of 49. The difference between the two sets of scores was 33. This has shown the gains of RET individual counseling. The answer to research question 1 was the RET individual counseling method was very effective in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers state of Nigeria as revealed by their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Research Question 2: How effective is CCA in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State as measured by their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Table 2
Registered Widows in CCA Group Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

Pre-test mean scores				Post-test mean scores			
Group	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>
CCA Experimental Group 2	15	45	6.2	15	78	11.2	33

The post-test mean score of 78 was higher than the pre-test mean score of 45. The difference between the two sets of scores was 33 indicating the effectiveness of the CCA individual counseling method. The answer to research question 2 was the CCA individual counseling method was very effective in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria as revealed by their pre-test – post-test mean scores.

Research Question 3: How effective are the combined effects of RET and CCA in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as measured by their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Table 3
Registered Widows Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores for Group 3 (Combination of RET And CCA)

Pre-test mean scores				Post-test mean scores			
Group	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>
RET/CCA Experimental Group 3	15	51	6.8	15	80	12.3	29

Table 3 shows an increase in the post-test mean score of 80 over the pre-test mean score of 51, indicating a difference of 29. The answer to question 3 was; The combined effects of RET/CCA was very effective in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows as revealed by their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Research Question 4: Which is the most effective counseling method in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State among the 3 experimental groups; RET, CCA and a combination of RET / CCA?

Table 5 shows the calculated t-test value of 9.3 was higher than the critical or table value of t at 0.05 level of significance that is 2.048. This calls for the rejection of H_{01} . It therefore means the mean difference between experimental group one RET and the control group is statistically significant.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with CCA and that of the Control group.

Table 6
Table Value of t-test

Group	n	x	SD	SE	p	df	Calculated t-test value	Table value of t-test	Decision
CCA	15	78	11.2	3.4	0.05	28	7.9	2.048	Rejected
Control	15	51	6.8						

Table 6 shows clearly the calculated t-test value of 7.9 was higher than the table value of 2.048. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating there is no significant difference on social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with CCA, and those in the control group who received no counsels was rejected. This implies the statistical difference is significant between the CCA group and the control group.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with the combination of RET and CCA and the control group who received no counseling.

Table 7
Summary of Data and t-test on the Significant Difference between the Post-test Mean Scores of Registered Widows Exposed to a Combination of RET and CCA and Those in the Control Group

Group	n	x	SD	SE	p	df	Calculated t-test value	Table value of t-test	Decision
RET / CCA	15	80	12.3	3.6	0.05	28	8.0	2.048	Reject H_{03}
Control	15	51	6.8						

Table 7 shows clearly the calculated value of t-test which is 8.0 was higher than the table value of t-test at 0.05 level of significance which is 2.048. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating there is no significant difference in social adjustment post-test mean scores of registered widows counseled with a combination of RET and CCA and those in the control group RET / CCA and the control group was rejected.

HO₄: There is no significant difference in social adjustment post-test mean score of registered widows counseled with RET, CCA, and a combination of RET / CCA.

Table 8
Calculated f-ratio and Critical Value of f-ratio

Source of variance	Sum of squares (ss)	df	Mean square (ms)	p	Calculated f-ratio	Critical value f-ratio	Decision
Between groups	112.94	k-1 3-1=2	556.47	0.05	0.66	3.22	Accept HO ₄
Within groups	3570.80	n-k 45-3=42	85.02				
Total	3683.80	n-1 45-1=44					

The result on Table 8 shows the calculated f-value was less than the critical f-value at 0.05 level of significance that is $0.66 < 3.22$. This therefore calls for the acceptance of Ho₄. This suggests that the mean difference between the three experimental groups is statistically, not significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis that states there is no significant difference in social adjustment post- test mean scores of registered widows counseled with RET, CCA, and a combination of RET/CCA is retained. This result is in agreement with the answered questions in Research Question 4.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the registered widows before counseling had a low level of social adjustment as revealed in the pre-test results shown side by side with the post-test results on tables 1, 2, 3, and 4. Social adjustment scores increased tremendously after exposure to treatment (counseling) as revealed by the post-test mean scores of the same tables. This means counseling with the techniques of REC, CCA, and a combination of RET/CCA was very effective in counseling registered widows. This result is in line with the findings of Olta and Odoemelum (1999) who used RET and CCA in improving self concept among physically handicapped secondary school students in Afikpo Urban of Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

This finding is again affirmed in the hypothesis test (table 5) which also showed there is a significant difference in social adjustment post-test means scores of widows counseled with RET and that of the control group. The result of the calculated t-test value of 9.3 and critical value of t at 0.05 level of significance was 2.048. This showed there was indeed a significant statistical difference between those counseled with RET and the control group that received no counseling. The outcome of this analysis is in consonance with the findings of Eniola and Adebisi (2005) who conducted an experimental study of this nature among 48 visually impaired students in the Federal College of Education Oyo using RET and Reality therapy in improving socialization. They found the RET group to socialize better than the reality group. Ker, Ekoja, and Ekoja (2007) also affirms the effectiveness of RET in their bid to improve voters' attitudes in Benue State University among 2004/2005 session post graduate students. The result showed the treatment factors of RET produced a significant mean difference between the experimental and control group in favor of the former.

This finding also supports the hypothesis test (table 6) that shows a notable and significant difference between the widows counseled with CCA and those in the control group who received no counseling. This finding affirms that CCA is an effective counseling technique in counseling widows for social adjustment. The finding corroborates that of Neely (1982) who found CCA and other therapeutic approaches to be very effective in the management of unassertiveness and emotionally disturbed students. In the same vein, the low social adjustment showed in the pre-test mean scores improved significantly after receiving counseling.

Another result of this study shown on Table 7 was there was a statistical significant difference between those counseled with a combination of RET and CCA and the control group who received no counseling. Social adjustment increased tremendously after counseling widows with RET and CCA. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Broedel, Ohlem, Proff, and Southhand (1960) who used RET and CCA in an experimental research of this nature to improve under achievement among gifted adolescents. They found the treatment groups and the control group to be significantly different in favor of the experimental groups.

Another major finding of this study found on Table 8 was there was no significant mean difference between those counseled with RET, CCA, and those in the combination group of RET and CCA. This implies that all the therapeutic approaches were effective; none was more effective than the other. Again this finding was also in line with the finding of Olta and Odoemelam (1999) who concluded that RET, CCA, and the combination of the two were effective interventions in improving self concept of physically handicapped adolescents. When RET and CCA are combined as a therapeutic approach, it can improve behaviour effectively.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. RET, CCA, and a combination of RET and CCA are all effective tools in enhancing social adjustment among registered widows in Rivers State of Nigeria.

- All the counseling approaches adopted in this study were effective in bringing about behavioural changes among registered widows in Rivers State. None was more effective than the other in improving social adjustment among these widows.

- RET, CCA, and a combination of the two can be used to help individuals in a diverse setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- Counseling services should not be limited to the school system or children alone as a universal service for humanity; it should be rendered beyond the boundary of the school system.
- Government in Nigeria should establish counseling centers at strategic places to cater for all classes of people that need counseling.
- Counselors in Nigeria can help individuals to improve on their social adjustment using RET, CCA, and a combination of both.

Implication of Findings to Counseling

Counseling contributes positively towards behaviour modification, and one of the principles of counseling states that “Counseling is for all people” since this is the case Neely (1982).

- Counselors should not restrict themselves within the confines of the school environment. As a community project, counseling can be performed beyond the borders of the school environment to address different issues and diverse kinds of people in our society.
- Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should work in harmony with the government and other co-operate bodies and stakeholders to advocate employment of counselors in every establishment where humans exist.
- RET/CCA can be used to help educators and policy makers to critically appraise their thoughts and plans before taking any action.

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