

**Assessment Of The Effect Of Group Counseling On Psychological Adjustment Of People Living With HIV/AIDS For Improved Academic Performance In Ebonyi State.**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

The study assessed the effect of group counselling on the psychological adjustment of students living with HIV and AIDS for improved academic performance in Ebonyi State. A descriptive survey design was used, with a sample size of 50 HIV and AIDS patients in secondary schools. Three research questions and null hypotheses were formulated. Questionnaire were used for data collection, while mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. One of the findings is that, there is significant relationship between group counseling and psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS. The researcher recommends among other things that, Guidance counsellors, and Curriculum planners should plan programmes of intervention using group counselling techniques for secondary school students/ youths

**Key words:** Group counselling , Psychological adjustment, HIV and AIDS.

**INTRODUCTION**

## **Background to the Study**

The "Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) is a viral infection that has the effects of destroying the body's immune system, a situation called Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is a fatal disease in which the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) gradually destroys the ability of the immune system to fight off a wide range of infectious agents" (National Action Committee on AIDS-NACA, 2017). Researches on AIDS have shown that "HIV is transmitted through blood contact, sexual intercourse with an infected person, sharing of sharp body piercing objects, homosexual contacts and mother to child transmission during pregnancy, labour and breast feeding" (NACA. 2017). The mode of transmission of HIV makes it very "vulnerable to be transmitted from one person to another" (NACA, 2017). "Since the first case of HIV was reported in 1981, millions of people had died globally from the infection. For instance, in 2018 the estimated number of people living with HIV in Nigeria was projected at 2.95 million while the cumulative AIDS death was estimated at 280,000 people annually", and Ebonyi State inclusive, (National HIV Sero-prevalence Sentinel Survey: Preliminary findings, 2018)

Adjustment involves the application of essential skills to triumph over life contingencies (Kevles. 2015). This involves "how people live healthy and emotionally balanced life style and how well they relate with the demands of individual striving to satisfy their personal needs as well as deal with the demands and constraints that are placed on them by their environment" (Kevles, 2015). Psychological adjustment according to Kcvtes (2015), refers to how people live a healthy and emotionally balanced life style and how they relate well with people around them.

## **Concept of Group Counseling**

"Group therapy is a therapy carried out between a therapist and a group of people

sharing the same problem or condition. The composition of the group is usually four (4) to ten (10) people. The leader of the group is trained psychotherapist. Group therapy is a process using group interaction to facilitate understanding and self-acceptance of individuals in a group. Member of the group are not randomly selected. For therapeutic session to be effective, the therapist considers the age range of group members: The success of any psychotherapeutic

session depends on the age range of group members. Group counselling has some significant advantages which include: "Each individual feels understood and appreciated by those who suffer from the same problem; It helps the patient to feel that he is not alone and so helps the patient to develop a sense of solidarity and share their experience (Akinade, 2012; Mebjosa. 2018 and Egbule. 2009).

### **Concept of HIV and AIDS**

The emergence of HIV and AIDS virus is one of the most devastating occurrences in human history. HIV means Human Immuno Deficiency Virus. It causes an ill health state known as Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (Adesina, 2016). When HIV enters the body, it attacks the immune system of the body, it gradually destroys the body immune system, as a result of which the body is subjected to various opportunistic infections.

"AIDS was first recognized as a distinctive new disease in 1981 among homosexual men in the United States of America. However, there are evidences to show that AIDS started spreading in the late 1970s and early 1980s among men and women of multiple sexual partners" (Adesina, 2016). "The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. It belongs to the family of viruses known as retroviruses. HIV is of two types: HIV-1 and HIV-2. The latter differs from the former in that it seems to take a longer time (about 1 - 8 years) before the full-blown disease develops. This type appears to be more prevalent in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Health, 2007).

### **HIV is known to be transmitted from one person to another through the following:**

Sexual intercourse between homosexual and heterosexual in which case one partner is infected with the AIDS virus. This virus is more prevalent in educational institutions.

Through the use of infected medical instruments such as unsterilized needles or syringes.

Through blood transfusion: When infected blood is transfused into one's body-system, the receiver automatically gets the AIDS virus. Infected pregnant women will transmit the HIV to

their babies through the placenta or through the birth process. The AIDS virus cannot be transmitted through the under listed avenues; saliva, tears, vomits; sweat, faeces and urine, although very small amount of the virus have been found in these fluid (NACA, 2017).

### **Concept of Adjustment**

The term "adjustment, so widely used in the field of personality, mental hygiene and social psychology is implicitly normative. It assumes an individual psychological factor and environmental factors operating in a specific frame of reference.

Adjustment is "an inevitable process in the life of every individual. It involves the ability to cope over life contingencies". Therefore, adjustment could be referred to as the various activities of an individual which involve adapting to adverse condition of life, vocational, social and economic contingencies. Maslow and Mittloman in Pat (2019), from psychological view of maladjustment posit that "the essential characteristic of the concept of adjustment is that, it is the solution of problems.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on the Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) propounded by Albert Ellis (1979). He used A-B-C-D-E principles to illustrate his theory thus: A is the Activating agent; B is the Belief or Self thought; C is the Consequences of the belief/thought; D is disputing the belief which will result to E, which is the education of the client. Therefore this theory states that A does not cause C, it is B that causes C.

### **Empirical Study**

Farber, Mirsalimi, William and Daniel (2003), carried out a study on the, the meaning of illness and psychological adjustment to HIV and AIDS in Atlanta USA.. The researcher adopted a descriptive survey design, and formulated four research questions and one hypothesis. The sample of the study was 203 adults with symptomatic HIV disease and AIDS. The t-test statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for data analysis. The result shows that the

understood the meaning of HIV and AIDS and how to adjust and live with it. The above study is related to the present study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV) is a "viral infection that has the effects of destroying the body's immune system, a situation called Acquired Immune-deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). AIDS is a fatal disease in which the human immune-deficiency virus (HIV) gradually destroys the ability of the immune system to fight off a wide range of infections agents. Studies on HIV and AIDS had shown that HIV is transmitted through blood contact, sexual intercourse with an infected person, sharing of sharp body piercing objects, homosexual contacts among others. The pandemic of HIV and AIDS has spread to all regions of the globe and infected over sixty million people worldwide. HIV/AIDS scourge has "tremendous effect on the social and psychological lives of some youths in Ebonyi State. The infection itself is linked up with stigmatization and discrimination which leads victims to their early graves. The problem of this study isto find out the effect of group counselling on the psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS for improved academic performance in Ebonyi State?"

### **Purpose of the study**

The major purpose of this study is to "determine effect of group counseling on psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS for improved academic performance in Ebonyi State", specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The effect of using group counseling on the psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State.
2. Whether there is any significant difference between academic performance of subjects

exposed to group counseling and subject who are not exposed to group counseling in

Ebonyi State

3. The differences between male and female respondents in their psychological adjustment to HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in Ebonyi State specifically at Heart-to-Heart Health Centre and Alex-Ekume federal University Teaching Hospital. The study was restricted to HIV victims in the hospitals. Then the content scope of the study covered group counseling, adjustment, and HIV youths in Ebonyi State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of group counseling on the psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State?
2. Is there any significant relationship between the psychological adjustment of victims exposed to group counseling and subjects who are not exposed to group counseling in Ebonyi State?
3. What is the relationship between group counseling and the academic performance of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State?

### **Research hypotheses**

The following three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 significant level.

HO1 'There is no significant relationship between group counseling and the psychological

adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State".

HO2 "There is no significant relationship in the psychosocial adjustment of subjects exposed to group counselling and others not exposed to individual counseling in Ebonyi State".

HO3. There is no significant relationship between group counseling and academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State"

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research design**

Descriptive cross sectional research design was used for this study. This design was used because it investigated the effect of group counseling on the psychosocial adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS.

### **Area of the Study**

The area of the study was all the heart-to-heart centres spread across the three educational zones and Alex-Ekume Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is made up of 13 Local Government Areas (LGA). Alex-Ekume Federal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki serves the whole of the LGA within Abakaliki Metropolis and nearby LGAs in that area.

### **Population of the Study**

The population for the study consisted of all "the HIV positive youths in the Alex-Ekume ssFederal Teaching Hospital Abakaliki and Hear- to-Heart centres in three senatorial zones of Ebonyi State, numbering one hundred and fifty (150) persons tested positive to HIV of which about 70% were youths .

## **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

The sample size was 50 HIV patients. Stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that all the genders were represented in the two groups".

## **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument for data collection was "questionnaire designed by the researcher with the help of experts in the field. It was titled Psychological Adjustment scale instrument of HIV people living with HIV/AIDS youths (ASIHPY). The questionnaire was made up of two sections-A and B. Section A is on personal data of the respondents such as age and sex while section B is on the adjustment to HIV victims. The instrument contains 23 items in all. The four-point rating scale was provided for respondents to indicate the weight of the response modes. Response were Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1".

## **Validity of the Instrument**

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by giving it to three experts, one in Guidance and counseling, one from Educational Psychology and one from Measurement and Evaluation all in the Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The experts checked for clarity, appropriateness, content coverage and ambiguity of the items. Which informed the final drafting of the instrument.

## **Reliability of the Instrument**

To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, trial-testing was carried out using 30 respondents from general hospital that were not part of the sample in Ebonyi State. The choice was because some general hospitals offer counseling to HIV positive persons on daily bases. Data from the trial test were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha to calculate, which yielded 0.83.

## **Method of Data Collection**



"The researcher adopted a three phase procedure for data collection in this study, namely: pre-treatment phase, treatment phase and post treatment phase. The researcher used two assistants who served as facilitators to help collect the data.

### Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed jointly in line with each research question and related hypothesis. Descriptive statistics such as adjusted mean and standard deviation, t-test of independent mean and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were jointly used

### RESULTS

**Research question 1:** What is the effect of group counseling on the psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State?

**Table 1:** Mean scores and standard deviation of people living with HIV/AIDS on group counseling and psychological adjustment treatment.

		<b>Preadjustment</b>			<b>Post Adjustment</b>			<b>Mean gain score</b>
		<b>Mean scores</b>						
<b>Group:</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>		
<b>Group</b>	25	1.70	0.42	16	3.10	0.74	-1.4	
<b>Counseling</b>								
<b>Psychosocial Adjustment</b>	25	1.90	0.70	16	2.80	0.92	-0.9	

Data in Table 1 show "pre adjustment and post adjustment mean scores on people living with HIV/AIDS on group counseling and their psychological adjustment treatment. The data show that HIV positive youths exposed to group counselling had a pre adjustment mean score of

1.70 and standard deviation of .42 and a post adjustment mean score of 3.10 and standard deviation of .74. The mean gain score from the pre adjustment/ post adjustment was -1.4.

From psychosocial adjustment, the pre adjustment means score was 1.90 and a standard deviation of .70 whereas the post adjustment means score was 2.80 and a standard deviation of .92. The data on the table suggested that HIV people exposed to group counseling showed a higher adjustment as evidenced by the difference in their mean scores".

**Research Question 2:** Is there any significant relationship between psychological adjustment of victims exposed to group counselling and subject who are not exposed to group counseling in Ebonyi State?

**Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations on significant relationship between psychological adjustment of subjects exposed to group counseling and subject who were not exposed to group counseling**

Group	Mean scores			Mean Scores		
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD
Group Counseling	25	2.13	0.76	16	2.97	0.82
Individual counseling	25	2.31	0.87	16	2.45	1.00

Data in Table 2 show "pre adjustment and post adjustment mean scores on the significant relationship between subjects exposed to group Ccounseling and subject who were not exposed to group counseling treatment. The data show that people exposed group counselling had a pre-

adjustment mean score of 2.13 and standard deviation of 0.76 and post adjustment mean score of 2.97 and standard deviation of 0.82. From individual counseling, the pre-adjustment mean score was 2.31 and standard deviation of 0.87 whereas the post adjustment mean score was 2.45 and a standard deviation of 1.00. The data on the table suggested that HIV people exposed to group counseling showed higher adjustment as evidenced by the difference in their mean scores".

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between group counseling and academic performance of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State?

**Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviations of respondents on group counseling and academic performance of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State?**

S/N	Pre-adjustment Mean scores			Post Adjustment Mean Scores			Mean Score
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD	
Group Counseling	25	2.90	0.89	25	2.13	0.76	-0.77
Academic perform.	25	2.94	0.85	25	2.31	0.87	-0.63
	50						

Data in Table 3 show the academic performance of HIV people exposed to treatment. They had pre-adjustment mean score of 2.90 with standard deviation of 0.89 and a post-adjustment mean score of 2.13 with standard deviation of 0.76. The mean difference score of the two was -0.77. Also the second pre-adjustment mean score of 2.94 with standard deviation of 0.85 and a post-adjustment mean score and standard deviation of 2.31 and 0.87 respectively.

**H01.** "There is no significant relationship between group counselling and the psychological adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State".

**Table 4: "Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis for the relationship between group counseling and the psycho-social adjustment of HIV/AIDS people". N = 50**

Variable	N	X		$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	r-Cri	r-cal	P-value
				$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$				
Group counseling	25	17.917	3.578	2150	15.232	15.659	0.195	0.20*	002
Psycho-social	25	19.317	3.628	2318	32017				

From Table 4, "the calculated r-value of 0.20\* was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.195 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant relation between group counselling and the psycho-social adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS. Observation of the calculated r-value shows that it is positive, this implies that the more the group counselling, the better the psycho-social adjustment of these people living with HIV/AIDS".

**H02.** "There is no significant relationship in the psychosocial adjustment of subjects exposed to group counselling and others not exposed to individual counseling in Ebonyi State"

**Table 5: "Pearson Product moment analysis of the relationship in the psycho-social adjustment of HIV/AIDS people exposed to group versus other to individual counseling. N = 50**

Variable	X	SD	R	Sign-value
Individual group (25)	18.500	1.128	2.20*	1.96
Grouped (25)	20.933	3.078		
<b>Total (50)</b>	19.716	3.103		

From Table 5 "the calculated r-value of 2.20 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 1.968 needed for significance at 0.05 alpha level. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant relationship between the psycho-social adjustment of subjects exposed to group counselling and others exposed to individual counselling. Furthermore, the mean scores of those exposed to group counselling were higher ( $\bar{x} = 20.933$ ,  $SD = 3.078$ ) than the scores of their counterparts exposed to individual counselling ( $\bar{x}_2 = 18.50$ ,  $SD_2 = 3.128$ ). This implies that those exposed to group counselling are better focused and more consistent in their responses and as such are likely to adjust psychosocially than others exposed to individual counselling. Because they are somewhat inconsistent in their responses, such HIV/AIDS infested group is likely to adjust very effectively psycho-socially than individuals who discuss their problems with only counselor.

**H03.** "There is no significant relationship between group counselling and academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State"

**Table 6: Pearson Product moment analysis of relationship between group counselling and academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS**

Variable	N	X	SD	R	P-value
Group Counselling	25	3.33	0.55	3.793	0.05*
Academic performance	25	2.63	0.85		
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>				

The table 6 above, attempted to find out "the significant relationship between group counselling and academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State, The relationship samples test result indicated that calculated r-value of 3.793 was significant at probability value of 0.05; this implied that there was significant relationship between group counselling and academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ebonyi State

### Summary of Major Findings

1. Intervention using group counselling is effective in handling HIV positive youths.
2. There is significant relationship between group counseling with people living with HIV/AIDS.
3. The counseling in groups, the better they cope and adjust psycho-socially in their lives".
4. HIV people exposed to group counseling showed higher academic performance than those not exposed to group counseling techniques".
5. There is significant relationship in the psycho-social adjustment of subjects, exposed to group counselling and others exposed to individual counselling. Those exposed to group counseling confessed (or assert) to adjust better, psycho-socially than others expose to individual counselling by their mean scores".

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The first research question sought to find out if group counseling had no significant effect on the psychosocial behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS. "The psychological aftermaths of testing positive to HIV/AIDS are drastically reduced if results and counselling are done in group. The study concluded that the groups were effective in reducing feelings of anxiety and depression which are important factors in psychosocial adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS". Also, in the study carried out by Bochow (2018), on "the struggles of those affected by HIV/AIDS in Tanzania and how they try to survive, the results show that many infected clients expressed the need for the continuation of their weekly peer group counseling. The study concluded that HIV/AIDS counseling groups are vital to improve the living standards of those infected by HIV/AIDS". This again conforms to the assertion of Balmer et al., (1992) "that group counseling is a useful therapeutic intervention for people who are HIV positive on both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Group counseling buttresses the statement that people need people. People living with HIV/AIDS often stay alone, depressed, afraid of the future and many other self-defeating feelings. Gradually attending group counseling sessions help them to come to terms with their illness. At the morning sessions, they see other people improving in

appearance and health. They are also able to share experiences without the fear of stigmatization or discrimination. Group counseling buttresses the statement that people need people. People living with HIV/AIDS often live alone, depressed, afraid of the future and many other self-defeating feelings".

Gradually, "attending group counseling sessions help them to come to terms their illness. At these sessions, they see other people improving in appearance and health. They are also able to share experiences without the fear of stigmatization or discriminations The researchers were able to see improvements first hand in psychological well-being and depressed mood often associated with HIV/AIDS infected people during the course of this study. Participants gradually became more positive about their illness and their lives. These improvements were glaring to the observers". According to Zajoic (1965, 1966). "the group offers understanding and support which encourages members to explore the problems they have brought to the group. He further states that the role people play in groups can cause them to think and act in ways they might never have imagined themselves capable of doing

The researcher observed that "as the group counseling progressed, participants were more able to ask questions about HIV/AIDS and coping strategies. Some older member in the group were able to reassure new members and give them the psychological assistance they needed. Some older members, who appeared to have adjusted psychosocially to HIV/AIDS, were able to discover their leadership qualities. Some of them have not only become group leaders they have also been able to secure employment with the agencies that organize the group counseling. Hypothesis two in the null form stated that there is significant relationship in psychosocial adjustment of subjects exposed to group counseling, those exposed to individual counseling".

The second research question ascertains "the relationship of group counseling of persons living with HIV/AIDS on their academic performance. The result showed that group counseling has relationship on academic performance of people living with HIV/AIDS. This is true as mere discussion with subjects showed that general acceptance to group counseling with (PLWHA), reasons for it according to them are: it enables them discuss openly with counselors, provides a unique opportunity for them to share their experiences and how to live with inherent challenges as well provides them with security that they are not alone". These revelations are in

consonance with Edu (2012); Akindade (2012); Egbule (2009) who opined that "when people with similar problems are brought together, it enhances effective therapy; However, "this approach is usually not a good idea until the person has been able accept the diagnosis enough to come to the group and communicate honestly. Group support can help patients cope with their emotional responses to HIV which could affect their academic performance in school. It help them on the basis of accurate information, shared experiences, empathetic listening, and assistance with problem solving. Counseling with support can help people with HIV share their feelings about secrecy and stigma and consider how these influence their emotional and academic performance in school. Counseling and support can also help people consider how their own behaviours can promote academic performance and well-being, such as seeking resources for adequate nutrition, shelter, proper medical follow-up, adequate sleep, and management of stress and anxiety".

**Conclusion** This study revealed "that group counselling is an effective intervention for people living AIDS. When experiences are shared, it helps patients to cope with their emotion. Group counselling helps patients in their psychosocial adjustment. As they encourage one another, patients become proactive rather than reacting and feeling negative , jut their situation. This is because group counseling plays an important role by helping people living with HIV/AIDS (LWHA) to share experiences with one another as well as help patients cope with their responses. Counseling people in group can help people with HIV share their feelings about secrecy and stigma and consider how these influence their emotional physical health. With increasing recognition of psychological and social issues a holistic model of health care, group counseling would be vital to improve the life of PLWHA. The merits of group counseling as an intervention for people with HIV/AIDS cannot be underestimated as they far outweigh their demerit. HIV/AIDS counselors should be well versed in group counseling as a proactive measure for the counseling of people living with HIV/AIDS. The effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic will be felt for generations because so many children of those affected are being deprived of adequate nurturing, nutrition, education and role models, but through this approach they will get to know one another to form social networks"



## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been proffered.

1. "The federal and state ministries of Education should organize and sponsor workshops and seminars for educational psychologists, school guidance counselors and leaders on how to implement group counselling techniques".
2. "Guidance counsellors, and curriculum planners should plan programmes of intervention based on the group counselling techniques for youths".
3. "Group counselling should be introduced in all hospitals, clinics and care centres where attention is given to people living HV/AIDS".
4. "School guidance counsellors should recognize that gender is a significant factor in the adjustment of HIV positive youths and therefore should take cognizance of planning treatment programme for the youths."
5. "In order to aid the psychosocial adjustment of people living with HIV/AIDS, patients who have benefited from group counselling should be encouraged to bring along others known to be infected with the virus to attend group sessions. This will curb the spread of HIV".
6. "Comprehensive support system linking and co-coordinating existing psychosocial services as well as building community capacities to provide counseling and support should be provided to ensure sustainability, continuity of interventions community development.
7. "Group counseling should complement individual counseling. At the rate at which HIV is spreading, group counseling is the most efficient approach in the counseling of people living with HIV/AIDS

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