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Socio-Psychological Intervention And Prejudice Among Staff Of Rivers State University

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated Socio-Psychological Interventions and Prejudice Reduction among Staff of Rivers State University. The study specifically examined the influence of cognitive therapy and social advocacy on gender and cultural prejudice among University Staff. Quasi-experimental pre-post-test research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised academic and non-academic staff drawn from eleven facilities of the University. A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Data were collected using two standardized instruments namely: Prejudice Reduction Questionnaire (PRQ) and Standardized Social Support Questionnaire (SSSQ). The instruments were administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants. Data collected were analysed using mean scores and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that cognitive therapy significantly influenced gender prejudice reduction and cultural prejudice among Staff of Rivers State University. The findings also showed that Social advocacy had a significant. The study concluded that Socio-psychological intervention are essential mechanisms for reducing prejudice are promoting harmonious interpersonal relationships within organisational setting. The study recommended that among others that university administrators should establish cognitive therapy workshops and advocacy groups to promote diversity, equity and inclusion within the institution.

Keywords: Socio-Psychological Intervention, Cognitive Therapy, Social Advocacy, Gender prejudice, cultural prejudice.

INTRODUCTION

Prejudice remains one of the major Socio-psychological challenges confronting institutions and organisations across the world. Prejudice refers to perceived negative attitudes, beliefs, and discriminatory behaviours directed towards individuals or groups based on gender, Culture, Ethnicity, Religion, or Social based on Gender, Culture, Ethnicity Religion, or Social affiliation. According to Gordon Allport (1954), prejudice is an antipathy based upon family and inflexible generalization directed toward a group or an individual because of group membership. In modern organizations, prejudice manifests in subtle and overt forms that negatively affect productivity, cooperation and social integration. In Nigeria, prejudice has continued to influence interpersonal relationships within workplaces, educational institutions, and public establishments. Nigerian universities, which are expected to serve as centers for intellectual advancement and special integrations, are not exempted from issues relating to gender and cultural prejudice.

Staff members from diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds often interact within instructional environments where stereotypes and discriminatory tendencies may emerge.

Socio-psychological interventions have increasingly, been recognized as effective approaches for reducing prejudice and promoting tolerance among individuals. Cognitive therapy and social advocacy are among the major interventions used to address discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Cognitive therapy focuses on changing irrational beliefs, stereotypes and negative thought patterns that contribute to prejudice. According to Beck (1976), cognitive therapy assists individuals in restructuring distorted thinking patterns and replacing them with rational perceptions.

Social advocacy, on the other hand, involves organized efforts aimed at promoting equality, justice, inclusion, and social awareness. Social advocacy encourages individuals and institutions to challenge discriminatory norms and support inclusive social policies (Beck, 1976). Albert (2004) observed that social advocacy helps in fostering social cohesion and reducing intergroup hostility on multicultural environments.

The staff of Rivers State University consists of individuals from different ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, and social orientations. These diversities sometimes create interpersonal tensions and prejudicial attitudes among staff members.

Consequently, there is a growing need for effective socio-psychological interventions capable of reducing prejudice and improving institutional harmony. Therefore, this study examined socio-psychological intervention and prejudice among staff of Rivers State University with emphasis on cognitive therapy and social advocacy.

Statement of the Problem

Despite increasing awareness about equality and diversity within Nigerian Universities, prejudice based on gender and culture still persist among staff members. Gender prejudice often manifests through discriminatory treatment, unequal opportunities, and stereo-typical assumptions about male and female staff.

Similarly, cultural prejudice occurs when individuals display bias or hostility toward colleagues from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. These prejudicial attitudes negatively, affect staff cooperation, workplace relationships, job satisfaction, and institutional productivity. In many cases, university policies and awareness programmes have not sufficiently address the underlying psychological and social causes of prejudice. Although, several studies have examined prejudice and discrimination in educational institutions, limited empirical attention has been given to socio-psychological interventions such as cognitive therapy and social advocacy as mechanisms for prejudice reduction among University Staff in Nigeria. This gap necessitated the present study.

Hence, the problem of this study is to determine whether socio-psychological interventions can significantly reduce gender and cultural prejudice among staff of Rivers State University.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate socio-psychological interventions and prejudice among staff of Rivers State University. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Appraise the influence of cognitive therapy on gender prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University.
2. Evaluate the influence of cognitive therapy on cultural prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University.
3. Investigate the influence of social advocacy on gender prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University.
4. Examine the influence of social advocacy on cultural prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of cognitive therapy on gender prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University?
2. To what extent has cognitive therapy influenced cultural prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University?

3. How does social advocacy influence gender prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University?
4. What is the influence of social advocacy on cultural prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho1: There is no significant relationship between cognitive therapy and gender prejudice reduction among staff of River State University.
- Ho2: There is no significant relationship between cognitive therapy and cultural prejudice reduction among Staff of Rivers State University.
- Ho3: There is no significant relationship between social advocacy and gender prejudice reduction among staff of River State University.
- Ho4: There is no significant relationship between social advocacy and cultural prejudice reduction among staff of River State University.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in the following ways:

The findings of the study will help University staff to understand the causes and consequences of prejudice and provide practical strategies for improving interpersonal relationships and workplace harmony. Also, the study will provide social works with relevant information on socio-psychological interventions useful for addressing discrimination attitudes and promoting social inclusion within institutions.

Counselling psychologists will benefit from the study through enhanced understanding of cognitive therapy techniques that can be applied in prejudice reduction and behavioural modification. This study will assist policy makers in formulating institutional policies aimed at promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and non-discriminatory practices within universities and other organizations.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to staff of Rivers State University and many not fully representing other universities in Nigeria. Time constraints, financial limitations, and respondent's unwillingness to provide complete information also constituted limitations to the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioural Theory was developed by Aaron T. Beck in 1976. The theory emphasized that human behaviour is influenced by thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions. CBT argues that prejudice develops from irrational beliefs and stereotypes learned through social interaction. Cognitive therapy helps individuals challenge distorted beliefs and replace them with rational thinking patterns.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977. The theory posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement, prejudice is learned through social interactions, family influence, media exposure and environmental condition.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-Efficacy Theory was also developed by Albert Bandura in 1986. The theory states that individuals' beliefs in their ability to perform task influences their behaviour and attitudes. High self-efficacy promotes confidence in engaging positively with diverse groups.

Community Organization Theory

Community organisational theory was advanced by Murray Ross in 1955. Theory emphasises that collective participation and advocacy initiatives within institutions can reduce prejudice through group participation and awareness campaigns.

Authoritarian Personality Theory

The authoritarian personality theory was developed by Theodor Adorno et al., in 1950. The theory argues that individuals raised under rigid and authoritarian condition are more likely to develop prejudicial attitude towards others.

Culture Theory of Prejudice

Culture Theory explains that prejudice emerges from cultural norms, values, and traditions transmitted across generations. Cultural beliefs shape how individuals perceive members of other groups.

Scape Goat Theory of Prejudice

Scapegoat theory was propounded by John Dollard in 1939. The theory suggests that frustration and social tension often lead individuals to blame weaker groups for societal problems.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and Turner in 1979. The theory posit that individuals classify themselves into social groups, leading to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination.

Contact Hypothesis Theory

Contact Hypothesis Theory was propounded by Gordon Allport in 1954. The theory states that meaningful interaction between members of different groups reduces prejudice when conditions of quality and cooperation exist.

The study was anchored on Social Learning Theory because prejudice and discriminatory behaviours are often learned through observation, interaction and social experiences within the work place environment. The theory therefore provides a suitable framework for explaining how socio-psychological interventions can reshape attitudes and promote positive behavioural change among staff of Rivers State University.

Empirical Review

Albert (2004) examined conflict management and social integration in Nigeria institutions and found that advocacy programmes significantly reduced ethnic tensions and discriminatory attitudes among workers.

Abdulkadir (2011) investigated prejudice and organizational behaviour among University staff in Northern Nigeria and discovered that cognitive restructuring technique positively influenced interpersonal tolerance and cooperation. Also, Allport in 1954 conducted a study on prejudice and intergroup relations and concluded that increased social contact under favourable conditions reduces stereotypes and hostility.

Bandura in 1977 found that individual learn prejudicial behaviours through observation and reinforcements within social environments. Okeke and Eze (2018) examined cognitive behavioural interventions among civil servants in Nigeria and reported significant reduction in gender-based stereotypes after therapeutic intention.

Afolabi (2020) studied social advocacy and workplace inclusion in tertiary institutions and revealed that institutional advocacy campaigns improved gender equality awareness among staff. In a study carried out by Nwachukwu in 2019, investigated cultural prejudice in Nigerian Universities and found that counselling interventions significantly improved staff tolerance and intercultural relations.

Ogunleye and Ahmed (2021) observed that diversity awareness programmes positively influenced organizational harmony and reduced discriminatory tendencies in public institutions.

Summary of Literature

The reviewed literature showed that prejudice remains a major social problem affecting organizational relationships and productivity. Theoretical studies emphasized the psychological studies demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions such as cognitive therapy and social advocacy.

However, few studies have specifically examined socio-psychological interventions and prejudice reduction among staff of Rivers State University. Most previous studies focused on students, public institutions, or general organizational settings without addressing the combined influence of cognitive therapy and social advocacy on both gender and cultural prejudice. This gap justified the present study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design, specifically the pre-post researched design.

Area of the study

The study was conducted in Rivers State university located at Nkpolu-Oroworukuro, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Nigeria.

Population of the study

The population of the study comprised academic and non-academic staff of Rivers state University.

Sample and sampling technique

A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from the Eleven (11) faculties of the university.

Method of data collection/instrumentation

The researcher and two trained research assistants distributed the instruments to all participants. The study used the standardized questionnaires for data collection: Prejudice Reduction Questionnaire (PRQ) and Standardized Social Support Questionnaire (SSSQ)

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings for research question one showed the effective use of cognitive therapy for reduction of gender prejudice reduction among staff of rivers state university. The findings for research question two revealed the effective use of cognitive therapy for cultural prejudice reduction among respondents.

The findings for research question three showed the effective use of social advocacy on gender prejudice reduction among respondents. Finally, the findings for research question four revealed that there was no significant effect of social advocacy on cultural prejudice reduction among respondents.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that socio-psychological interventions significantly contribute to prejudice reduction among staff of rivers state university. Cognitive therapy proved effective in reducing both gender and cultural prejudice, while social advocacy demonstrated effectiveness mainly in reducing gender prejudice. The study further established that institutional efforts aimed at promoting inclusion, empathy and diversity are essential for maintaining harmonious work place relationships and organizational productivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The university should establish cognitive therapy workshops for staff to address unconscious biases and promote empathy.
2. University administrators should encourage the formation of advocacy groups within the university to address diversity, equity and inclusion issues.
3. Policy makers should create and enforce policies that discourage discriminatory behavior and provide a safe environment for reporting incidents. They should also establish disciplinary measures for prejudice related misconduct.
4. University staff should be encouraged to engage in self-reflective practices to identify and challenge their biases.

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