

Psychotherapy And Private Practice: Why We Are Still Lagging Behind

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the failure of psychotherapy in private practice, classifying the lapses in the practice resulting to the unimportance in the practice among Nigerian Clinical Psychologist. It also defines the practical roles of the Psychologist in enhancement of the practice. This paper relied on books and oral interviews as source of information in the course of development. It argued that no time is late that psychotherapeutic practice can be encouraged and sustained in Nigeria, outlining the steps in order to achieve this objectives. This paper will provide valuable information regarding learning, knowledge and answer the question which a lot of young Psychologist has been asking "is there a hope for us in this our profession". Hence the findings will be useful in policy making, therapeutic purposes and bases for further research.

Key words: *Psychotherapy: Private practice: Clinical psychologist: Encouragement and Sustenance*

Psychotherapy in Nigeria

Illness, be it mental or physical, is as old as mankind because man is finite or imperfect. Illness, especially mental illness, can be caused by biological and environmental influences. Biology can influence mental health in several ways. It can influence mental health through heredity like faulty genetic development resulting in abnormal conditions; or through infectious diseases which may create an abnormal condition

such as brain disease resulting from syphilis. Physiological abnormalities may lead to abnormal conditions through structural, endocrine or neurotransmitter irregularities. In structural irregularities, an organ is damaged from birth (congenital) or as a result of trauma. Endocrine dysfunction results in hormone irregularity, thereby influencing behaviour. In addition irregularities of the neurotransmitters which are the chemical messengers of the nervous

system affect a range of moods and feelings. Biological or physiological factors also affect the mental health of Nigerians. Environment also has a prominent role to play. In fact, psychological problems are on the increase now due to terrorism, Ebolaphobia, and the new structural, economic, social, environmental and political changes in the changing Nigeria. Nigeria as developing nation has a lot of changes taking place in her. This has resulted in the springing up of new towns, increase in the number of industrial, administrative and educational establishments. Nigeria as a growing nation is also gugged by many problems.

These problems affect the behavior of the citizens more or less, directly or indirectly. Immediate post war years in Nigeria ushered in a period of strife and struggle for survival, possibly as an over-compensatory reaction to the draw backs and wastage caused by the civil war". Recurrent killing of innocent people across Nigeria by Fulani herdsmen and Islamic extremist, armed robbery attack with no one taking responsibility for people's safety. People became irritable and stressed up. A lot of marital breakdowns abound with single parenthood, tumultuous life and living; a child growing up with either a mother or a father. Acute unemployment/underemployment and other types of vocational problems also existed in Nigeria at this period of recession.

All these situations affected the populace to a point where many people began to manifest abnormal behaviors associated with intra-psychic and socio-environmental sources, vagrant psychotics, beggars, armed robbers, assassins, hypertension patients, people with depression and drug abuses are increasing. So in Nigeria while the developmental changes are taking place, more and more people are manifesting signs of, mental,

emotional, environmental, psychological and psychosomatic sicknesses.

Definition of Term: Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy -- also called talk therapy, therapy, or counseling -- is a process focused on helping you heal and learn more constructive ways to deal with the problems or issues within your life. It can also be a supportive process when going through a difficult period or under increased stress, such as starting a new career or going through a divorce.

Generally psychotherapy is recommended whenever a person is grappling with a life, relationship or work issue or a specific mental health concern, and these issues are causing the individual a great deal of pain or upset for longer than a few days.

Typically, most psychotherapy last for 50 minutes, once in a week, or otherwise as specified by the psychologist, Psychiatrist or other licensed therapist.

Most psychotherapy tends to focus on problem solving and is goal-oriented. That means at the onset of treatment, you and your therapist decide upon which specific changes you would like to make in your life. These goals will often be broken down into smaller attainable objectives and put into a formal treatment plan. Most psychotherapists today work on and focus on helping you to achieve those goals. This is done simply through talking and discussing techniques that the therapist can suggest that may help you better navigate those difficult areas within your life. Often psychotherapy will help teach people about their disorder too, and suggest additional coping mechanisms that the person may find more effective.

Common Types of Psychotherapy

- Behavior Therapy (BT)
- Cognitive Therapy (CT)

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- Psychodynamic Therapy (PT)
- Family Therapy (FT)
- Group Therapy (GT)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Relaxation Therapy (RT)
- Hypnotherapy (HT)
- Bibliotherapy (BLT)
- Placebo Therapy (PCT)
- Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT)
- Observational Therapy (OT)
- Rational Emotional Behavioral Therapy (REBT)
- Speech Therapy (ST)
- Insight Therapy (IT)
- Music Therapy (MT)

Psychotherapy in Nigeria Today

In Nigeria, the clinical centres that offer psychological services are very few. As of February 2015 pulse Nigeria reported that 21 million Nigerians suffer from mental illness, the Ministry of Health reported Nigeria having 18 mental health hospitals; 18 psychiatric units in the University Teaching Hospitals, 9 psychiatric units in the state general hospitals, 5 units in armed forces hospitals.. The statistics shows that the facilities available are not enough to cater for the 180 million people living in Nigeria, so also is the number of trained personnel. Though awareness for psychological services is still low with the general population, the very few who are aware, especially those from low socio-economic class may not afford the scanty mental health services available. Psychotherapeutic treatment is a lengthy process and costs money in terms of clinical assessment, consultation fees and transportation since the available psychological services are offered mostly in the cities. Literacy level is also still. Other factors include people's customs and tradition (belief in ancestors, spirits and

mystical forces), traditional healing still thrives among the populace especially in the rural areas of the country.

Roles of a Therapist

- It is the therapist's responsibility to establish the boundaries of the therapy situation. This includes providing a comfortable safe environment and establishing a warm, caring therapeutic culture. It is also the therapist's role to define what exactly psychotherapy is, because what constitutes psychotherapy is different for different therapists. It is also important for the therapist to define clearly the administrative rules that apply to the therapeutic situation. This amounts to a contract between the therapist and the patient. The therapist provides professional services to the patient for a fee, the patient agrees to be responsible for keeping appointments, being compliant with medications, if prescribed, and paying their bills.
- A major part of the professional role of the therapist is to facilitate the awareness, growth and psychological development of the patient.
- The uniqueness and strength of the patient-therapist relationship forms a vehicle for therapeutic inquiry and growth. The therapist is responsible for building rapport with the patient through empathic listening, caring and warmth. It is understood that the rapport between therapist and patient is one of the most consistent predictors of successful treatment. As trust builds between the therapist and the patient so does self-knowledge and understanding for the patient.
- Therapy is a relationship between the patient and the therapist in which both are expected to change through their

interaction in the process of therapy. This is an asymmetrical process in that the patient is expected to change more than the therapist.

- One of the goals of therapy is to explore the factors that may interfere with the relationship between the patient and the therapist. By delving into these factors and identifying them, effective strategies can be developed to overcome them. Typically the barriers to a better relationship in therapy are a microcosm of the barriers to better relationships with people outside of therapy.
- The therapist needs to be congruent in this relationship. This means being authentic, genuine and transparent. The patient strives to become congruent in their interactions with the therapist as well as striving to be congruent outside of the therapeutic situation.
- The Therapist should be a good marketer especially using the online resources.

Lapses in the Practice of Psychotherapy in Nigeria

Ability: Some professional counselling and psychotherapy organizations actively discourage newly qualified practitioners from entering private practice. Indeed, if the recommendation against entering private practice had anything to do with actual counselling ability, the admonition should surely be against counselling at all, not merely against counselling privately.

Appropriate Environment: Rather, the recommendation is justified out of concern for the existence of an appropriate environment outside the counselling hour — including relevant supervision and other professional support, as well as a sound business infrastructure. The primary

question for counsellors considering working in private practice has almost nothing to do with when they qualified. It has everything to do with whether they can bring to bear the right organizational and business skills to create and maintain such an environment. In fact, this environmental factor includes the therapy environment, most of the so call clinicians are not following international specifications on the clinic or therapy office requirements.

Poor Training: Most of our training institutions are outdated in all rounds (technique, methods, approach and therapies) counselling training itself rarely provides the opportunity to acquire such skills; indeed, one might view the cautious attitudes toward entering private practice as a tacit admission that training programs almost universally fail to deliver much of significance in this area, hence most therapist after training are still full of doubt in their abilities and skill. Even working as a counsellor or therapist within an organization rarely provides opportunities to learn explicitly, and gradual osmosis seems to be the primary means whereby counsellors gain the skills they need to create an effective environment for private practice and business survival.

Poor Awareness: Most therapists finds it difficult to flow with the trending technology in sensitizing and providing help to the people, hence especially in Nigeria, with the trend of internet and social media; there is still no or very little presence of psychotherapist in the online space of therapy, Hence it becomes difficult for people to even know that we exist not to talk of how to find us.

Inferiority: In Nigeria the practice of psychotherapy has been like not in existence, even our founding fathers lacked courage to build the therapy environment or even to start up a clinic, so you discover that is a common syndrome with the Nigerian

psychotherapist that we don't even know our worth, which leaves us with the believe that we are all meant for the classroom (Lecturers).

Non Adherent to Ethics of Practice: Just as important as a town meeting constitution, the same way ethic and conduct to practice is very important, but unfortunately many of us don't even know about ethical guidelines binding the practice.

Non Adaptation of Therapy: It is quite very unfortunate that we have copied down the same mentality of taking everything "hook line and sinker" once is coming from the western world not minding that we have lot of differences; is it colour, language, up bring, norms and values, environmental factors etc.

Over Religiosity: It is important to note that Nigeria as a religious Country where everything is giving a spiritual interpretation or explanation starting from an accident, loss of child, mother and father, mental illness etc are seen as having a spiritual cause; either the old woman or man at the village or the kindred that doesn't want your progress etc, hence it is difficult even for the professionals to completely believe in their training and competence, maybe because they don't want to sound odd considering the religious background of their upbringing and the family values, hence the difficulty to balance the two and maintain a common balance.

Stigmatization of the Practice: I remember those days I was in my undergraduate studies , when people see you on the street going for lectures , they are always curious to know what your studying so I will say psychology ,immediately their response will be hmmm "Ndi na- agwo Ndi Ara" people that treat "mad" (mentally ill) people. Nobody want to be associated with a therapist because of the belief that people will start seeing him or her as someone who is "mad" (mentally ill) so they prefer to go

to the traditionally conventional houses or the prophets and prophetess for spiritual therapy.

Absent Of Regulating Body: The lack of an association body regulating the practice is a contributing to the ill practices; people do the way they like in the practice and get away with it, including the self-acclaimed psychotherapist, no rules or regulations of practice.

Failures of Psychotherapy Practice in Nigeria

To be sure, entering private practice may be a big leap from selecting the environment to providing counselling or therapy services within a larger organization! But by investing some time to acquire appropriate business and organizational skills. This hurdle can at least be made a little safer and a little less intimidating. It is important to note that owning a private clinic or practice is not lust all, one have to possess good managerial/administrative ability for the clinic/practice to function effectively, then the clinical interview skills and patient, good treatment plan ideology and therapy implementation measures

Recommendations

There is need for Psychotherapy Association: A profession is worthy of its name if it inculcates in its members a strong sense of the special obligation that is attached to their vocation. Since non-members whether clients or not may not be able to determine whether or not a professional person has acted properly, the association must protect them (non-members). Exercises of control by the association of the members to produce efficiency which in turn attracts a great deal of trust in the trained professional. This is important because where the services of the trained professionals involve the psychological wellbeing of the client it is of

great importance that he/she be able to rely upon the competence and character of the professional. The association does not only protect the rights of the laymen by controlling the psychotherapists, the association also trains psychotherapists. Professional station should be limited to those who successfully complete the requisite training and are willing to comply with the appropriate standards of conduct. So the layman or client who cannot judge a psychotherapists' competence or loyalty must put his trust in professional certification, code of ethics, and professional disciplinary enforcement.

There is need to introduce Psychological Missions centered on psychotherapy once every year for masters students in Clinical psychology nationwide just as the medical missions, this will not only solve the people's problem alone but will create awareness for the existence of the practice and in turn will be relevant as people seeing the positive effect will be willing to subscribe to therapy.

There is need to introduce a joint research for student/lecturers either to replace or be an addition to the old practice of one B.Sc graduate one weightless and valueless research, instead key needs of the state or federation are researched; researches that will proffer solution to major country's problem like development of test to measure and detecting corrupt persons, Rehabilitation for Criminals, etc. Research that will proffer solution to terrorism, militancy, Civil unrest, agitations, inter tribal conflict and recession. Once this is achieved I bet you our relevance to the Nigerian Nation will not be denied. The world history of clinical Psychology practice started in the development of Alpha/Beta test and treatment of PTSD and Traumas among war veterans during the world war; hence we can repeat the history in Africa and do relevant research instead of valueless papers.

Hence a line should be drawn between licensed psychotherapists and other group whose work touches on the practice of psychotherapy for the interest of the entire Nigerians. For instance one may ask for the basis on which practitioners can decide whether they are qualified to offer specific professional services. The mere possession of advanced degrees and credentials do not resolve the issue. This is because in reality, many people who complete masters' and doctoral programmes still lack the skills, training, experience and personal characteristics needed to operate as an effective psychotherapist in a certain society.

Summary and Conclusion

Psychotherapy in Nigeria still have a long way to go, therefore Psychotherapists, psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses especially psychiatric nurses are called to face the challenges presented by mental health care today. Calls from many individuals and group for a functional and relevant psychotherapy for Nigeria have challenged so many Nigeria mental health practitioners to undertake researchers in the area of integration of our customs and values in the development of psychotherapeutic methods and in the practice of psychotherapy and get up to the challenge of opening private practice and centre to make our profession a professional one.

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