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INTEGRATIVE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS INTERVENTION ON COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Community social work involves understanding the power dynamics and social relations that govern the relationship between various structures and diverse communities and working to achieve social justice through structural change. This paper examined the integrative multidisciplinary teams intervention on community social work programmes. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents from different integrative multi-disciplinary teams that were working with community social work organizations in Lagos State. A self-designed questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection, which was pilot tested through test-re-test and yielded a reliability coefficient (index) of 0.781. Three research hypotheses were formulated and tested. Analyses of data were done using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Chi-square fixed at the .05 significant levels. Results revealed a positive and significant relationship between the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and awareness of community social work programmes (r = .593; p < .05); perceived results of the integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community
social work programmes (r = .439; p < .05). Also, demographic background (age, gender, marital status, and education) of integrative multi-disciplinary teams were found to be related with the intervention in community social work programmes. This study therefore, concluded that the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams, its perceived results and adequate awareness of community social work programmes will transform the community positively.

Key words: Integrative, multi-disciplinary teams, intervention, community, social work, programmes

Introduction

A multi-disciplinary approach involves drawing appropriately from multiple academic disciplines to redefine problems outside normal boundaries and reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations. Like families, multi-disciplinary team can work brilliantly together or be totally dysfunctional. It is hardly surprising that when you assemble a diverse group of people with varied skills into a team, things do not always go smoothly, but multi-professional teams are a fact of life in social work, with integration between professions set to get ever closer. Multi-disciplinary teams consist of staff from several different professional backgrounds who have different areas of expertise. These teams are able to respond to clients who require the help of more than one kind of professional.

Multi-disciplinary teams are groups of professionals from diverse disciplines who come together to provide comprehensive assessment and consultation towards the overall well-being of a community. While their primary purpose is typically to help team members resolve difficult cases, teams may fulfill a variety of additional functions. They can promote coordination between agencies; provide checks and balances mechanism to ensure the interest and rights of all concerned parties are addressed; and identify service gaps and breakdowns in coordination or communication between agencies or individuals. They also enhance the professional skills and knowledge of individual team members by providing a forum for learning more about the strategies, resources and approaches used by various disciplines. Teams are as diverse as the communities in which they reside. Although the criteria used to select cases to review varies from one to the other team, most cases in which prior interventions have proven unsuccessful as well as cases in which multiple agencies are involved there is a lack of clarity regarding each agency’s role.
Multi-disciplinary team process implies that team members practice relatively independently with respect to goal setting and treatments. Members of multi-disciplinary teams may meet regularly or communicate in other ways, but their lack of common goals and their autonomous practice can result in lack of coordination and conflict over priorities and decision-making. Teams that adopt an interdisciplinary modus operandi evidence a stronger focus on integration of activities to meet shared goals. Team members contribute assessment data and convene to synthesize information, to identify issues and to plan to meet goals that are shared by the team and the older person. Each subsequent treatment or rehabilitative intervention by a team member is related to achievement of overall goals. Both interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary teamwork require considerable educational preparation of team members. They must agree on leadership, team process, priority setting and methods to resolve conflicts.

Integrative multi-disciplinary effort is underpinned by common goals and shared understanding, interpersonal and emotionally intelligent skills to build and maintain and understand the perspective of others, paying careful attention to methods of communication, sharing information and understanding the impact of the work on each professional involved. Team members of a community social work intervention must share common sense of purpose and understanding of the needs of the community and the route to meeting those needs, how to work in a community-centred way, the respective roles of individuals and agencies and the boundaries and shared areas within the roles as well as an understanding of different perspective and challenges of each role. The most commonly mentioned benefits of multi-disciplinary effort are; improvement in services, joint problem solving, ability to take a holistic approach and better understanding between agencies. Integrative multi-disciplinary teams consist of staffs from several different professional background who have different area of expertise. They are able to respond to clients who need help of more than one professional.

The team trans-disciplinary has been used to characterize a further evolution of teamwork that is highly collaborative and in which role boundaries are often blurred and skills transferred across professional boundaries. The team cross-disciplinary and multi-skilled have been applied to teams where members extend their skills well beyond the boundaries of their parent discipline. The focus for community social work intervention on integrative multi-disciplinary team assist people either directly or through access to other forms of support, to reach a level where participate
more fully and independently and access support from mainstream services, voluntary and community organizations.

One of the most important elements of the social work process is the selection of the intervention method. Social workers in the field of community development can be found in many areas of practice and a variety of settings. The work is often not situated within legislated programmes and workers may or may not be required to be registered with the provincial regulatory body. Community practice can involve community economic development such as improving local economies in rural areas experiencing out-migration or it can include working with citizens, group and organizations to interface with large systems, institutions and the political process. The identity of community varies widely and changes depending on the context of the specific issue or social problem. Social workers who practice from a community development or community organizing perspective attempt to address the systemic issues that create social problems. In many cases, they may also be engaged in the kinds of individual problem-solving practices embodies in many social work positions. Community social workers’ greatest contributions are to nourish the process of community integration and to help make it a deliberate part of future development.

According to Woodward (2002), there are three categories of social work intervention and they are micro social work intervention which involves offering direct services to individuals families; mezzo social work intervention which involve working with agencies, small organization and groups in order to make policies or develop programmes for a particular community; macro social work intervention is such provided on a large scale to entire communities and systems of care. Community social work involves understanding the power dynamics and social relations that govern the relationship between various structures and diverse communities and working to achieve social justice through structural change. The main approach to this work is a belief that people acting together have a great capacity to improve their own circumstances, as they have first-hand knowledge of the situation and what needs to happen to change things for the better (Hall, 2015). This reflects the fundamental values of the social work profession generally. Some of the tools utilized by community social workers are developing community awareness, leadership identification and development, creating strategic alliances, adult education, fostering collaboration and building community capacity. The community social worker can be involved in
various large-scale social movements and broad issues such as homeless or in the development of programmes or projects.

Community social workers are appropriately concerned with the well-being of residents who live in marginalized areas. Resolving issues such as inadequate police and fire protection, poor childcare, unresponsive landlords, substandard schools on a macro level rather than the individual level significantly affects the largest number of people. Social work at the community level is important because neighbourhoods that are neglected and rundown, rife with crime and social disorder, destroy the quality of life. Fear and isolation and stress to residents’ lives, leaving them feeling defeated, hopeless and victimized often suffering from mental illness and addictions, even motivated individuals lose heart when their friends and families continue to struggle.

Social workers who practice as community organizers or developers are guided by the ethics and standards of the profession and by principles of sustainable community development. Research approaches most commonly used in this area of practice are qualitative, such as participatory action or ethnographic research. From a community perspective, the social work role is to conduct assessments and share information with the identified community of interest. Research knowledge is often used to formulate the steps needed in developing a strategy. Effective community social work practice is integrative, comprehensive, collaborative, participatory, strengths and asset focused, founded on building capacity, sustainable, empowerment focused, focused on the present with an eye on the future and inclusive (Mizrahi, 2009). Effective community development practice requires a multitude of skills sets (Shulman, 2009). This skills set are seen as essential in the toolkit of all social workers.

The mutual support function, the social welfare function, is the community’s provision of help to its members when their individual and family needs are not through family and personal resources. Mutual support is helping one another in time of need. Primary and secondary groups – family, neighbours, friends – traditionally provided the first line of social support and protection. As communities have become more complex, more secondary groups and tertiary formal organizations have been developed to perform the mutual support function, such as governmental agencies, for–profit and nonprofit health and welfare agencies, other proprietary organizations such as insurance companies and day care centres and child-care coops Han, Grinstein-Weiss and Sherraden, 2009).
Social participation’s relevance for social work practice is explored more fully in the practice areas of community organization, networking and coalition building and community social casework. Social participation is imperative to social work’s obligation to social justice. Clients need to be brought into civic associations and social action coalitions. Integrating clients into community-based social support resources, provides social structures for reciprocity and provides opportunities to develop social capital for social and political empowerment. Grassroots community organizations need to coalesce and form mediating structures for individuals to survive in our global economy. Social workers need to promote local and national participation of communities/constituents’ as social and political actors rather than as customers, consumers and victims.

Frost (2011) found that the teams commitment and ability to build new ways of working could potentially form the basis of effective joined-up practice. An important characteristic of social work practice is the ability to develop skill of critical reflection, clearly needed to provide a broader service to people in difficult situations. This could increase collaborative thinking in multi-disciplinary settings. Additionally, benefits for social work in a multi-disciplinary context have been identified has opportunity to gain further understanding of other roles as well as improve inter-agency communication (Moran, McCallum and Zhang 2012). The advantages of multi-disciplinary working seems to be centred around offering a broader perspective, a better understanding of the issues affecting clients and improve interactions with other agencies. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that multi-disciplinary working increases demands and pressures on individual agencies.

Intervention occur as an everybody activity and in fact they make up a substantial majority of human behaviour and are made by those who desire to have great influence in this world. Therefore, social work interventions are purposeful actions taken by practitioners which are based on knowledge, skills learnt, understanding acquired and values adopted. It is the practice of working in a variety of ways with individuals, families, groups and communities in need to help them become more independent and assisting them in getting the resources they need to self sufficient. It is also defined as work undertaken with individuals, families groups and communities which involves the use of social work knowledge and skills within a social care organization to facilitate the provision of services and practice consistent with the codes and standards of practice in order to promote social inclusion and life opportunities of people using the services (Chigbu,
The process of social work intervention involves relationship between the social worker and the clients and collateral participants. Social work intervention are selected based on the issues, needs and strength of the clients which are determined as a result of the social worker’s assessment in order to develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the clients.

A community social work programme intervention is selected on the basis of the issues, needs and strengths of the client. These are determined according to psycho-social assessment conducted by the community social worker (Olaleye, 2013). Multi-disciplinary working is considered to be key in order to promote best outcomes for services users and for a more cohesive delivery of services. Multi-disciplinary working could also be considered as ideal, based on the argument that it is a holistic way of meeting clients’ needs. Nonetheless, challenges have been identified in research which suggest that multi-disciplinary working may blur professionals boundaries and threat professional identity for some social workers (Moran et al, 2012). There is also a concern that multi-disciplinary working might be negative and flawed given that the wide range of skills brought in by different professionals may cause conflict. A lack of shared meaning and values may also result in alienation in multi-disciplinary working. Moreover, the combination of role perception and expectations may impact agencies priorities and views, both at agency and individual professional level. Based on the foregoing, this study therefore concerned to examined integrative multi-disciplinary teams intervention on community social work programmes; also to evaluate the existing operational approaches of community social work and multi-disciplinary team. Also the study to determine the citizen’s perception about the effectiveness of multi-disciplinary teams on the intervention on community social work programmes.

**Research Hypotheses**

Ho₁ There is no significant relationship between the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and awareness of community social work programmes

Ho₂: There is no relationship between perceived results of the integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes

Ho₃ There is no significant relationship between demographic background of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes

**Methodology**
**Research Design:** The research design adopted for the study was descriptive research design. This design was selected for the study because the researcher attempts to determine whether there are relationships between variables; that is integrative multi-disciplinary teams and community social work programmes.

**Population:** The population for the study are both male and female in Community social workers, and integrative multi-disciplinary teams in Lagos State.

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** Purposive random sampling technique was used to select respondents from different integrative multi-disciplinary teams that were working with community social work organizations in Lagos State. The samples for the study comprised two Local Government Areas in Lagos State namely; Badagary, Epe LGA and Etiosa East LGA. 100 respondents were selected from each LGA which make the total respondents used for the study to be three hundred respondents.

**Research Instrument:** The study used self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher tagged “Integrative Multi-Disciplinary Teams Intervention on Community Social Work Programmes Questionnaire” (IMDTICSWPQ). It contained statements, which was used in eliciting responses from both male and female community social work organizations and multi-disciplinary teams. The 4-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) was used. The researcher ensured both face content and context validity of the instrument. Also, reliability of the instrument was ensured which yielded a coefficient of 0.781.

**Data Analysis:** Data collected were analyzed by using chi-square analysis to establish the relationship between integrative multi-disciplinary team’s intervention on community social work programmes at 0.05 level of significance.

**Results and Discussions**

**Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients of the relationship between level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and awareness of community social work programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level of interventions</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.593**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.593**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Table 1 revealed a positive and significant relationship between the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and awareness of community social work programmes ($r = .593; p < .05$). The hypothesis which stated that “There is no significant relationship between the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and awareness of community social work programmes” was rejected. This implies that the extent of at which integrative multi-disciplinary teams work on community interventions will significantly related to the degree at which the public will be aware of community social work programmes. This reflects the fundamental values of the social work profession. This is in line with the work of Hall (2015) that the main approach to social work is a belief that people acting together have a great capacity to improve their own circumstances, as they have first-hand knowledge of the situation and what needs to happen to change things for the better. And that some of the tools utilized by community social workers are developing community awareness, leadership identification and development, creating strategic alliances, adult education, fostering collaboration and building community capacity. The community social worker can be involved in various large-scale social movements and broad issues such as homeless or in the development of programmes or projects.

**Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients of the relationship between perceived results of the integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Results</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td>.439**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervn</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 2 revealed a significant and positive relationship between perceived results of the integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes ($r = .439; p < .05$). The hypothesis which stated that “There is no relationship between perceived results of the integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work
programmes” was rejected based on the outcome of this finding. It could be deduced that clients need to be brought into civic associations and social action coalitions through positive results. This result is in tandem with Frost (2011) that found that the teams commitment and ability to build new ways of working could potentially form the basis of effective joined-up practice. An important characteristic of social work practice is the ability to develop skill of critical reflection, clearly needed to provide a broader service to people in difficult situations. This could increase collaborative thinking in multi-disciplinary settings. Additionally, benefits for social work in a multi-disciplinary context have been identified has opportunity to gain further understanding of other roles as well as improve inter-agency communication (Moran, McCallum and Zhang 2012). The advantages of multi-disciplinary working seems to be centred around offering a broader perspective, a better understanding of the issues affecting clients and improve interactions with other agencies. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that multi-disciplinary working increases demands and pressures on individual agencies.

Table 3: The socio-demographic correlates of background of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>socio-demographic background</th>
<th>N = 287</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less 20 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 yrs above</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First degree</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Sc &amp; Above</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that the chi-square value obtained for age is ($\chi^2 = 23.071$, $p = 0.000$); gender ($\chi^2 = 7.200$, $p = 0.017$); marital status ($\chi^2 = 3.907$, $p = 0.041$) and education is ($\chi^2 = 11.498$, $p = 0.000$) at the significant levels of less than 0.05 for the four variables respectively. Since these p-values were less than 0.05 values, it could be said that age, gender, marital status and education are correlates of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work.
programmes. However, for religion, the chi-square values obtained was 2.119 at insignificant level of .069. It could be said that religion is not a good correlate of integrative multi-disciplinary teams and intervention in community social work programmes.

This lend credence to the report of Onyekwere, Ololube & Agbor (2016) that socio-demographic characteristic such as education, gender, and age at times may serve as a reinforcer to integrative teams work and intervention in community social work programmes. He confirmed that social workers are professionals who develop over time through education and training. They are guided by moral, ethical values and circumstances, the doctrine of freedom, autonomy, equality, social justice, and respect for human rights. Their code of conduct, ethics, and laws regulate the profession. To achieve social transformation and the promotion of peace does not only require the good will of social workers, but commitment and funding from the government.

**Conclusion**

The involvement of a multi-disciplinary teams intervention on community social work programmes is key to securing the best outcomes for the community as the client. The effectiveness of the team working together to achieve a communal aim is greatly influenced by the establishment of good relationship, building trust and good communication between professionals and community members. They are guided by moral, ethical values and circumstances, the doctrine of freedom, autonomy, equality, social justice, and respect for human rights. Their code of conduct, ethics, and laws regulate the profession. To achieve social transformation and the promotion of peace does not only require the good will of social workers. In addition, to be able to build a community based on the principles of peace, social workers take interdisciplinary and collective approaches to the promotion of people’s consciousness about the required changes. Social workers are at the vanguard in the promotion of social inclusion and combating social exclusion. They provided substantial support to the needy, destitute and the mentally ill, and making them feel at home.
This study therefore, concluded that the level of interventions of integrative multi-disciplinary teams, its perceived results and adequate awareness of community social work programmes will transform the community positively.

References


