The effects of psycho-education on attitudes towards Mental health seeking behaviour among students of primary school teachers in training colleges in Kenya

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Abstract:

Background: Adolescence and young adulthood are critical life stages for mental health. There is substantial research in high income countries but relatively little in the low income countries such as Kenya. Studies have shown that some of the reasons for not seeking help are due to lack of knowledge in mental illness and what to expect in therapy and counseling. Aims: To find out the effects of psychoeducation on attitudes towards mental health seeking behaviour among primary school teacher trainees in four colleges in Kenya. Design: A quasi-experimental clinical study design Method and Instruments: First year and second year primary teacher trainees from 4 colleges,(two experimental and two control) were evaluated four times, before and soon after psychoeducation (only the experimental) three months and six months. This study used the following instruments: researcher designed demographic questionnaire, Opinions about Mental Illness Scale (OMI) Attitudes toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale-Short Form (ATSPPHS-SF) and Expectations about Counseling Scale (EAC-B). Results: Most of the teacher trainees had medium (neutral) opinions about mental illness, attitudes towards professional psychological help seeking and expectations about counseling. Psychoeducation favourably improved opinions about mental illness, attitudes towards psychological help seeking and expectations towards counseling, which was sustainable to ten months. Opinions about mental illness and expectations about counseling, demographic characteristics of gender, year of study and whether ever taught before coming to college contributed to the attitudes towards professional psychological help seeking for a mental health problem. Discussion: As far as could be ascertained from published literature this was the first study of its type in Africa. However, the findings of this study are similar to those obtained in high income countries. Recommendations There is need to include a mental health and counseling education in the TTCs curriculum so as to favourably improve attitudes towards professional help especially through counseling to the teacher trainees. There is need for further research on how to sustain improvement over a much longer period.