

African Values on Counselling and Psychotherapy and their Impact on Mental Health in Kenya. A Case of Universities and Hospitals in Nairobi

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Abstract

This study sought to interrogate the extent to which the African Values in relation to Counselling and Psychotherapy have impacted the victims of mental health as compared to Western counselling. Generally, mental health refers to how we think, feel, act, and interact with others, as well as how it relates to our ability to make choices and handle challenges that we may face. Counselling acts as a proactive and reactive measure that is aimed at addressing mental health issues. In Kenya, like in many parts of Africa, mental health has been relegated to the back, despite its significant social and economic implications. The objective of the study was to examine the extent to which African values regarding counselling and psychotherapy affect mental health. This study employs an experimental strategy and a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised counselling and psychology professionals drawn from both Public Hospitals and Public Universities within Nairobi, Kenya. A population of 200 respondents, drawn equally from both hospitals and universities, was targeted, with 100 from public hospitals and 100 from public universities. The study used Yamane's formula to derive the sample size, which was estimated at 200, ultimately yielding 100 respondents per segment. Both genders of respondents were considered, but not equally represented. The quantitative data collected were analysed and interpreted using SPSS to present the outcomes as percentages and frequencies, while the qualitative data were analysed narratively. The study findings revealed that in the African context, traditional counseling enhances learning for the transformation and social integration of cultural values, customs, and practices that are peculiar to each community. Most concerns affecting an individual are initially dealt with at the family level. African culture has material and spiritual values that are peculiar and unique in relation to its approach to issues, values, and worldviews. Culturally, some forms of behaviour, actions, and conduct are approved, while others are widely disapproved of, depending on the extent of violations of values that should otherwise be held sacred. Therefore, the Afrocentric worldview is holistic, interdependent, and oriented to collective survival and is highly respectful of the role of elderly people in the family and community. The recommendations were that there was a need for a collaborative relationship between counsellor and client based on equality, mutual trust, liking, respect, and caring. The varied characteristics, cultural backgrounds, and values of the clients should be appreciated. And that the understanding of African people in their environment, history, and culture demands that counseling approaches be based on the sensitivity of his/her personal history.

Keywords: Counseling, Mental Health, Psychotherapy

1.0. Introduction

The term "counselling" can be defined as a professional service that is meant to assist individuals in overcoming mental health/emotional disorders, besides other various life challenges, Radar (2024). The term is often used interchangeably with therapy, and therefore, for many years, counselling has remained a preserve only for those who want to improve their mental health/wellbeing, and has therefore not been a much-debated topic for the longest time. However, with the current surge in cases of stress and other mental health challenges, many people are progressively turning to counselling to improve the state of their mental health, as well as their overall well-being (Radar, 2024).

Counselling according to Seikkula, (2019), generally refers to the provision of professional assistance or guidance that subsequently aids in resolving personal, social or mental problems. It is usually administered by a professional and it can take various forms, including individual counselling, group counselling, and couples counselling which makes it considered beneficial in multiple ways. It can make one to have a better understanding of things that help in the acquisition of new skills to help manage themselves better. With the help of the counsellor, individuals are able to respond to their problems from different perspectives. And in that perspective, sharing of thoughts can exceptionally be helpful in changing one's life, and that is what counselling is all about, asserts (Avasthi et al., 2022). Another important aspect is the counselling process; this is mainly dependent on the individual counsellor and client as well as the urgency of the issue in question. However, the general process to be followed includes collecting background information, identifying key issues, developing a case, setting goals for therapy, charting implementation path of intervention and lastly conducting an evaluation.

Advocates of African traditional healing like Okunade, (2023), have championed for the inclusion of traditions and socio-cultural factors in counselling, advancing an argument that it does permeate the counselling sessions and to a large extent, helps in determining the outcomes thereof. This argument of the inclusion of traditional healing practices is premised on the integral role that cultural factors play in the general health and overall wellbeing of Kenyan communities for centuries. This is anchored on the strength of traditional healing, incorporating traditional knowledge and socio-cultural practices in the identification of health challenges, resolution and management of the identified challenges through a focused collective approach, asserts Chiboola (2020).

1.1. The Concept of Mental Health

The National Institute of Mental Health outlines mental health as depicting how we think, feel, act, and get along with others; additionally, it also relates to one's ability to make informed choices and handle challenges. Being mentally healthy cannot only help an individual to develop positive relationships with themselves but with others as well. Mental wellness is a vital component of societal health as it impacts one's economic productivity and overall human development. Unfortunately, its cost both in terms of financial and human resources is often underestimated in matters of policy planning and thus resource allocation.

Culture according to Ogundare, (2020), provides the framework with which most individuals fashion their identity, life goals and aspirations. It is then that these factors hold in determining the thoughts, feelings and behaviour towards phenomena, hence maladaptive behaviours, which, according to Kirmayer (2019), are a major cause of mental distress. These behaviours also help in the treatment-

seeking patterns, modes of expressing emotional distress, client-therapist relationships and consequently the outcomes of therapeutic interventions. Therefore, for treatment of mental problems to be whole, there emerges the need to embrace bio- psycho-social-cultural and spiritual aspects in a holistic approach to be successful through therapeutic interventions in the Kenyan context.

In Kenya and across Africa, mental health remains marginalized, despite its significant social and economic implications. For the most part, effective traditional African social institutions are based in the community. In the traditional African context, mental health care encompasses counselling, which focuses more on prevention and coaching than on intervention and problem-solving. In many communities, laid-down behaviour patterns are taught, and adherence is communicated through parenting, socialisation, and the various stages of maturation. This meant that the focus on counseling was not problem-oriented but aimed at growth and teaching for life. This was actualised through rites of passage, roles and behavioural expectations which were clarified and validated, with dissent getting punished, sometimes with ostracisation (Mwiti & Dueck, 2006).

According to the World Mental Health 2025 report, there were more than 1 billion people globally affected by mental disorders in 2024, which included anxiety and depression, thus elevating mental health conditions to be the second leading cause of long-term disability worldwide (WHO,2025). This negates Trompetter et al.'s (2017) definition of Positive Mental Health (PMH), which is said to be reflective of the state of mental well-being that transcends beyond mere absence of psychopathology. But encompasses emotional and psychological well-being, and functioning in psychological, social, and societal domains. The WHO report cites that nearly 150 million people in Africa are living with mental health conditions, with limited access to decentralized and integrated care, highlighting the region's mental health challenges. Worldwide, it is estimated that approximately 13% of the global population experiences a diagnosable mental health condition in their lifetime, according to James et al. (2018), but the majority of whom do not receive proper treatment. In terms of monetary value, this is estimated to cost the world approximately US\$2.5 trillion per year, and yet only a fraction of this amount is invested in addressing the causes and consequences of these issues (Thornicroft et al., 2016).

The mental health landscape in Africa reveals significant challenges that affect the well-being of millions. The prevalence of mental health conditions is alarming, with approximately 29 million individuals suffering from depression alone. Suicide rates in the African region surpass the global average, with eleven people per 100,000 losing their lives, highlighting urgent needs for effective mental health policies, Maverick (2024). Incidentally, Mental Health in Africa, according to Wada, Rajwani, Anyam, et al. (2021), continues to be a neglected public health issue. And as such, some countries in Africa do not have mental health services or policies, asserts Jaeschke, Hanna, Ali, et al. (2017). This

has exacerbated the prevalence of mental health conditions in the African continent, both historically and in its present state, and can be attributed to the impact of chronic poverty, war, conflict, natural disasters and population explosion. The effect of this enduring reality on the psychological and social development of particular societies within Africa is therefore far from being understood.

Kenya was ranked fifth among African countries with the highest number of cases of depression, Murunga (2021). Mental health experts have estimated that 1 in every 4 Kenyans may be suffering from a mental health-related issue, ranging from mild to severe disorders (MoH, 2020). With all these damning statistics, the country is still struggling with the provision of affordable mental health care services and treatment. With the emerging key challenge being a low level of awareness of mental health disorders, and in particular the symptoms associated with each (Ooko, 2021).

Therefore, with the increased recognition of mental health as a public health crisis locally, as it is in the international scene, there is a need for concerted efforts to be made to address it. It is in this regard that the United Nations has recognized “mental health and well-being” in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly under SDG 3, which focuses on good health and well-being. While this global spotlight is crucial, serious challenges still remain in translating these aspirations into tangible improvements, especially in resource-limited settings like Kenya.

1.2. The Concept of Counseling

Counselling, according to Antil (2025), can be defined as a purposeful, systematic process of helping individuals cope with their personal, social, emotional, and professional challenges so as to promote their psychological well-being as well as their holistic development. At its core, counselling as a practice is based on a collaborative relationship between counsellor and client, where the counsellor uses scientifically established methods of listening, empathy, reflection, and problem-solving to facilitate change (Antil, 2025). Counseling is perceived as one of the greatest helping professions on earth, yet many people remain perplexed about its true meaning, purpose, and intention. In many instances, the practice of providing counsel to others has always been conducted in a certain fashion within human society. It has been done in the context that humans are relational beings, who experience a range of emotions, and possess an innate desire to alleviate suffering with the hope of providing an abundant life. Incidentally, counselling not only treats mental health conditions but also helps individuals, groups, organisations, and society optimise their overall well-being (American Counselling Association, 2014). Therefore, counselling acts as a professional relationship that is meant to empower diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health/wellbeing, wellness, education, and attain their career goals.”

Counselling has also been considered as a proactive and reactive measure that is aimed at addressing mental health issues. It not only helps individuals cope with existing challenges but also equips them with skills to prevent future recurrence of such problems and maintain overall well-being. For that matter, mental health counselling as a remedy is meant to help in the diagnosis and subsequent assistance of the victims to improve their emotional and behavioural well-being, Antil (2025). It serves as an alternative to medication or can be used alongside medications or other mental health treatments. In the world today, millions of people have continued to experience the benefits of counselling, as it has become a specific mental health discipline that encompasses aspects of guidance and psychotherapy, Erford (2018). This, in essence, endeavours to focus on a wellness model aimed at improving the quality of life and involves both the counsellor and client in collaboration.

Currently, through integrative approaches, modern counselling combines techniques, emphasizing eclectic and multicultural counselling models. In Kenya, the application of traditional medicine/counseling intertwines deeply with spiritual and cultural beliefs. Many traditional healers subscribe to the idea that illness originates from spiritual discord or the influence of malevolent forces. Consequently, their approaches often incorporate spiritual rituals, prayers, and incantations aimed at summoning ancestral spirits or appeasing divine entities. Traditional medicine's scope extends beyond physical health to encompass mental and emotional well-being (Lobine,2020).

1.2.1. Current Applications of Counselling

Counselling today, according to Antil, (2025), has expanded into diverse fields:

- i. **Educational Counselling:** Helping students with exam stress, career choices, and adjustment problems.
- ii. **Clinical Counselling:** Supporting individuals with anxiety, depression, trauma, and addiction.
- iii. **Family and Relationship Counselling:** Addressing marital conflicts, parenting concerns, and communication issues.
- iv. **Career Counselling:** Guiding individuals in professional choices, skill assessment, and future planning.
- v. **Community Counselling:** Disaster relief counselling, crisis intervention, and rehabilitation services.
- vi. **Workplace Counselling:** Employee assistance programs (EAP), stress management, and performance enhancement.

According to Ikenye (2011), counselling and psychotherapy reflect the African core value of interdependence and its value system, as well as the Western core values of self-reliance and independence. A people's culture, through the core values and value system, defines optimal and

pathological functioning of individuals, couples, families, and communities. In this regard, counselling and psychotherapy are used as tools for education, integration, and intervention towards individual, couple, and family functioning within the relational matrix of ethnicity and culture. Therefore, in theory and practice, counselling and psychotherapy are not “*a theoretical and universal*” but cultural, ethnic, contextual, and particular to meet persons at their multiple points of need.

1.3. The Concept of Traditional Counseling in the African Context

Right from the beginning of the world, and as far back as the African continent existed, the African forefathers had ways of practising psychotherapy through advice from elders and wise men. Each African community identified some wise elders who could be consulted when people had issues they were unable to comprehend and subsequently resolve on their own, arising either in the communities or within the families (Madu, Baguma & Pritz, 1996). Additionally, the African psychology is a self-motivated expression of a mixture of African principles, values, and traditions that are communal in nature and therefore binding. Consequently, the practice of counselling and guidance in Africa may not be very much comparable with the Western world's mode of counselling. This can be attributed to various factors, ranging from the nature and experiences of clients, the availability of facilities, differences in the facilitating environment, and cultural influences to enabling regulations and government policies, assert Goss and Adebowale (2014). Many of which may be considered as delimiting factors that may not be known to consumers of counselling and guidance services on the continent.

Traditional counselling in the African context encompasses a broad perspective aimed at enhancing learning through the transformation and social integration of cultural values, customs, and practices peculiar to each human society. This is where counselling is portrayed as casual yet purposeful contact and interaction between people, with origins as ancient as the genesis of humankind. From a dimensional perspective, on the one hand are traditional forms of counselling practised from an Afrocentric perspective, and, on the other, modern forms of counselling practised from a Eurocentric perspective (Goss et al., 2014).

According to Madu et al. (1996), the word ‘Psychotherapy in Africa’ first appeared in the literature in 1996, and it can be defined as the study and application of the best practices in traditional psychological counselling. This is meant to enhance the healing of the psychosocial wounds, damages, stresses, and challenges of post-colonial Africans. As a subject, psychotherapy encompasses the study of the major theories and perspectives, and the techniques and approaches of individual psychotherapy, family therapy and systemic practice. The World Health Organisation (WHO), through its Traditional Healing

Practices Strategy (2014 to 2023), is keen not only on expanding the knowledge base on alternative traditional treatment but also on providing guidance and quality assurance standards (Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2019). Kenya boasts of a rich blend of respective cultural traditions and indigenous healing practices that have long been intertwined with the fabric of society.

As a method of healing, psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy, is meant to help a person learn and understand more about their emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, and how these factors influence their lives. It also provides ways to help reframe clients' thinking and, in turn, their stress response. Psychotherapy and other counselling techniques are also meant to help individual clients explore moods and behaviours, gain fresh perspectives, and better understand their emotions (Buchanan & Hughes, 2002). Consequently, counseling can help improve mood, treat mental illness, reduce medical costs, improve communication and relationships, and promote self-esteem and resilience. Psychotherapy includes psycho education, which educates people and their loved ones about their mental disorder, recommended treatment, and coping strategies. This is according to the National Association of Social Workers' report on behavioural health.

From the perspective of African Philosophy, Personality and Counselling Psychology, the core issue in developing an African theory, model, and method of counselling and psychotherapy is the use of "Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and Technique" in African contexts and meeting African persons at their multiple points of need. Ikenye (2011) asserts that for one to meet African persons at their multiple points of needs as psycho-social beings, there must be a theoretical and practical work model that will uphold African counseling and psychotherapy. This is so because the African counselling and psychotherapy is considered as an integrative model of dialogue, which articulates and delineates the processes of integration, translation, and interpretation of two systems of worldview that majorly inform our understanding of persons and counseling, that is, African and Western.

African psychotherapy, also referred to as "*African indigenous counseling*" or "*African traditional counseling*," is a sub-discipline within the currently more inclusive field of psychotherapy in Africa. And from the two broad schools of counselling stem the derivative approaches, such as adolescent counselling, career counselling, child counselling, couples counselling, and psycho-social counselling. Therefore, more often, counsellors do not limit themselves to just one form of treatment, but they do it based on the needs of an individual. They decide which method would help them the most and assist them in coping with their mental issues, Ikenye (2011).

Despite the availability of fairly adequate formal biomedical healthcare, nearly half of Africa's population seeks assistance from traditional and religious healers for mental health issues. In the

Kenyan situation, a significant portion of mental health patients consult both Western medical practitioners and traditional healers (Ndetei et al, 2008). This preference can be attributed to factors such as cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and accessibility, as the ratio of traditional healers to the population is much higher compared to that of medical doctors (Lähteenpuo, 2021). In this regard, this paper will interrogate African values in relation to counselling and psychotherapy and ascertain their impact on mental health.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

The statistics surrounding the prevalence and state of mental health conditions in Africa paint a worrisome picture. It is estimated that, African nations account for highest cases of mental health like suicide rates are high, especially among males, who experience 18 suicides per 100,000 people, compared to 12.2 globally, Maverick, (2024). This creates a deeper need of understanding these issues so as develop initiatives that will aim at improving public awareness and de-stigmatizing mental health. The landscape of mental health care in Africa is fraught with challenges that significantly hinder progress. With mental health stigma remaining a primary barrier to individuals seeking treatment as many still hold negative perceptions about mental health conditions, often associating them with curses, witchcraft, weakness or personal failure. These prevailing community attitudes contribute to isolation and disengagement from the much-needed services on mental health. Despite evolving public awareness efforts, deeply ingrained cultural beliefs continue to prioritize traditional and spiritual remedies, overshadowing effective medical treatments. In a region where only one mental health worker exists for every 100,000 people, it becomes clear that both education and infrastructure require urgent reform.

Looking at the treatment gap in mental healthcare system and the substantial number of patients who continue to seek help from traditional healers, reveals an enhanced recognition and acknowledgment of the importance of involving them in the overall improvement of mental health services in Kenya. This justifies the need to interrogate if the integration of traditional healers could improve access to care and address the need for cultural sensitivity when expanding mental health services. However, despite this integration of traditional practices holding great promise, it also presents unique challenges and ethical considerations, which may include, among others, issues related to cultural competence, informed consent, confidentiality, and the potential for harm. Additionally, there may be legal and regulatory considerations to address, such as licensing requirements and professional standards of conduct. All these may require that counselors navigate through the mentioned complexities with sensitivity and humility, recognizing the importance of ongoing training, consultation, and reflexivity in their practice. It is in that vein that despite the growing interest in traditional healing practices or psychotherapy to fill in this huge gap, there still remains numerous hurdles to be overcome, which may include but not limited

to efficacy, quality control and safety (Ozioma et al., 2019). Therefore, the motivation of this study was to interrogate the extent to which the integration of African values in relation to counselling and psychotherapy impacts the victim's/clients' mental health status as compared to Western counselling. No attempt has been made so far to 'sum up' the state of the art of African traditional counselling across the whole of Kenya Africa.

1.4.1. Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following two specific objectives:

1. Identify the African values on counselling and psychotherapy
2. Examine the implications of African beliefs on counselling and psychotherapy

2.0. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Mental health is a condition that causes substantial disability and exclusion, affecting the ability of many people to fully contribute to their respective communities and the economy at large. In most African countries, there has been historical neglect, mainly due to structural barriers such as poor and outdated health infrastructure, low coverage of health services, too few trained mental health professionals, outdated legal frameworks and policies, and inadequate investment. Besides, there has been limited awareness of mental illness, which has led to community stigma and discrimination, forcing many people to suffer in silence, as they fail to reach their full potential, and often experience abuse, including in the services that are meant to provide them with care and support, Patel, Araya. et al. (2007). These factors reinforce the vicious cycle of mental ill health, poverty, and marginalisation (Patel, Saxena, Lund, Thornicroft, et al., 2018).

2.2. The African Values on Counselling and Psychotherapy

2.2.1. The Place of Values in African Culture

The African culture has embedded "all the material and spiritual values of the African people in the course of history and characterizing the historical stage attained by Africa in her development, asserts Idang (2009). This simply means that there is a peculiar way of life, an approach to issues, values, and world views that are typically African. Based on cultural considerations, some forms of behaviour, actions, and conduct are approved while others are widely disapproved of. To show the extent of disapproval that follows the violation of values that should otherwise be held sacred, the penalty has been somewhat shameful and sometimes extreme. The concern with values, whether moral or aesthetic, occupies a very wide area in the discipline of philosophy. The fundamental importance of values is recognised as a core area of philosophy, alongside knowledge and reality. When a community is dealing with actions that people see as good or bad, right or praiseworthy or blame-worthy, they are, in essence,

dealing with the aspect of value theory that rightly falls under ethics or moral philosophy. Values represent the base upon which a person builds a satisfactory personal existence (age, geographical area, generation); they are crystallized through social models and personal experiences (cultural, professional, societal), and they represent the fundamental or universal paradigms, such as autonomy, equality, liberty, solidarity, freedom, justice, and fairness, Jigau, (2007).

2.2.2. African Culture and Values

A culture is an embodiment of different values, all of which are closely related. That is why one can meaningfully talk about social, moral, religious, political, aesthetic, and even economic values of a culture and the importance attached to them.

(i). Social Values

Social values can simply be described as those beliefs and practices that are practiced by any particular society. The society has a way of dictating the beliefs and practices that are performed either routinely by its members or performed whenever the occasion demands. Some social values, especially in African society, cannot exactly be separated from religious, moral and political values, etc.

(ii). Moral Values

African culture is embedded in strong moral considerations. It has a system of various beliefs and customs that every individual ought to adhere to in order to live long and avoid bringing curses on themselves and others. Adultery, stealing and other forms of immoral behaviour are strongly discouraged, and whenever a suspected offender denies a charge brought against him, he would be taken to a soothsayer or made to take an oath for proof of innocence. African proverbs and wise sayings have a rich repository of wisdom. The proverbs warn the African against evil conduct and, therefore, are a major source of African wisdom and a valuable part of African heritage^[1]. African culture has a moral code that forbids harming a relative, a kinsman, an in-law, a foreigner or a stranger, except when such a person is involved in an immoral act.

2.4. The Implications of African Beliefs on Counselling and Psychotherapy

2.4.1. African Way of Counseling

Rituals thrive in all cultures across the globe and have been used in dealing with life issues. Rituals play a significant role in the healing process in a traditional African setting. The Africans believe that they are unique and should be treated as such. In line with Kelly's Personal construct theory in the 1950s, counselling in the African context should incorporate some ways of traditional healing techniques in the process of counselling healing. This seems not to have been happening as the counsellors in Africa are trained only in the ways of the Western model of counselling. Wisdom and knowledge in African native lands were transferred through folklore, storytelling, songs, and skilful verbal sharing from one

generation to the next by family members and elders (Chery, 2002). These natural methods of healing seem to have been swallowed up by the advent of the Western way of therapy, Okapalaenwa (2014). Before the advent of the Western way of Counselling, Africans had herbalists/traditional healers, Spiritualists/Diviners, and Faith Healers, Ashu & Agbor (2011).

2.4.2. African Psychotherapy

African psychotherapy, also referred to as “African indigenous counseling” or “African traditional counseling,” can be defined as a sub-discipline within the currently more inclusive field of psychotherapy in Africa, according to Mbiti (1977), which is devoted to the study of the psychological healing systems indigenous to the traditional communities of Africa. Until recently, its initial preoccupation was the systematic study of the patterned ways, rituals, theories, and techniques invented in indigenous African communities to address the psychological needs and problems of living in the African world. This definition implies that there are many dimensions to the meaning of the term African psychotherapy. One of these is that it has both precolonial and postcolonial references. In its precolonial emphasis, it focuses on understanding the various healing practices.

The word ‘Psychotherapy in Africa appeared in the literature in 1996 as part of an edited book entitled: Psychotherapy in Africa, Nwoye (2010). Right from the beginning of the world and as far back as the African continent came into existence, the forefathers have been practising psychotherapy through the offering of advice from the elders and wise ones. Each community identifies among them some of the elders who could be consulted when people have issues that they are not able to resolve on their own, either in the communities or within the families. African psychology is a self-motivated expression of combining African principles, values, and traditions that are communal in nature. It reflects within broader Pan-African or trans cultural communities.

As an academic subject, “Psychotherapy” in Africa can be defined as the study and application of the best practices in traditional psychological counselling, Madu, Baguma, and Pritz (1996). It enhances the healing of the psycho-social wounds, damages, stresses, and challenges of the post-colonial Africans. Psychotherapy as a subject encompasses the study of the major theories and perspectives, and the techniques and approaches of individual psychotherapy, family therapy, and systemic practice.

Looking deeper into African Psychotherapy, counselling was in ancient times offered by uncles, aunts cousins, among other relatives, and gifts were given and received in good faith without a dual relationship aspect. In a real sense, this can be turned as dual relationship from the Western psychotherapy point of view.

There are two basic assumptions underpinning counselling theories from Western culture, according to Okpalaenwa (2015): namely, that ‘the ethical theory on dual relationship and receiving of gifts from clients, must be adhered to’. African hospitality and generosity, family ties, and community building are very important aspects of culture that could be considered in therapy. When you help a person with advice or offer any kind of help without charging the person, there is a likelihood that the person will come back to thank you, bringing gifts. Even if you charged the person, the person may feel obliged to offer you gifts. This is acceptable in African culture, and it is a positive thing. In the case where the counselors demand such a gesture, then it is not acceptable. The gifts that come from the heart should not be ignored. African psychotherapists should be able to draw a line as to what is right.

In a broader sense, the connotation of indigenous approaches has global application: many people worldwide practice some form of traditional counselling based on their socio-cultural context and the nature of presenting problems. Unlike in the European world, the African traditional ways of doing things are based extensively on oral tradition, that is, traditional systems of knowledge and social competencies about some critical issues, practices that are handed down from one successive generation to another orally (Giles-Veri, 2006).

Consequently, in developing an African Model of Counseling and Psychotherapy, it emerges that the African human person is multi-faceted, and optimal personhood is interdependent and relational. These relations are integral to the psycho-spiritual experience of meaning-making. And as such, optimal functioning at the individual, community, and national levels in Africa is defined by the core value of interdependence. The optimal systems of functioning as individuals, couples, families, clans, organisations, and societies are directed and driven by the core artefact of interdependence. In all cases, marriage, family, and kinship systems are appointed by society to raise and nurture children toward this core value of interdependence (Ikenye, 2011).

3.0. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design, which, according to Kothari (2004), describes the status of the phenomenon, determines the nature of the prevailing conditions, practices, and attitudes, and seeks an accurate description. The target population in this study comprises counselling and psychology professionals from selected hospitals and universities across Nairobi County. The study targeted a total of 200 respondents, drawn equally from both hospitals (100) and universities (100). The stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure representativeness by dividing a heterogeneous population into homogeneous subsets prior to selecting respondents from each subset. For the analysis, primary data were collected via a questionnaire. The tool included both open- and

closed-ended questions and was divided into two sections, each addressing one of the study's two objectives.

Prior to commencing the data collection exercise, the researcher sought approval from St. Paul University and permission from the target Universities and Hospitals in Nairobi. Prior to starting the process of cleaning the collected data, the researcher modified the questionnaire to check the accuracy of the data and whether it conformed to the objectives. Based on the open- and closed-ended questions in the tool, quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The researcher then evaluated the quantitative data using SPSS prior to generating descriptive statistics. For purposes of compliance, the researcher sought an introduction letter from St. Paul University's Ethical Review Board to carry out this research, as well as another from NACOSTI, to obtain a research permit for the study to be officially registered and conducted. Additionally, an introductory letter to the target respondents was shared, clearly explaining the study's aim and seeking their permission to proceed with the research. The researcher, in the course of collecting data, endeavoured to uphold the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of all the information obtained from them. The target respondents were encouraged to participate voluntarily without being coerced in any way whatsoever, and ensure that there would be no harm to any targeted respondent whatsoever.

4.0. Study Findings

A total of 200 questionnaires were sent to the target respondents, of which 105 were duly completed and returned, giving a response rate of 52.5%. Which, according to Mugenda O. M. (2012), is adequate.

4.2. The African Values on Counselling and Psychotherapy

The first specific objective was to identify the African values on counselling and psychotherapy, and the study findings revealed the following:

An overwhelming majority (96%) of respondents strongly agreed that learning and understanding each value-based culture contributed to progress in counselling and psychotherapy in Africa, while only 2% disagreed. Equally, close to (80%) of the respondents were in agreement with the assertion that conformity to psychotherapy was always sanctioned by societal values in indigenous African clients, as opposed to only 6% who cited otherwise, while 14% remained neutral.

More than half (58%) of the respondents were in agreement that in Africa, most counselling therapists often failed to meet the intended objectives in their practice due to their failure to recognize the indigenous African values, as opposed to 22% who were in disagreement, while 20% remained neutral.

Most (70%) of the respondents agreed that African people's "values" usually informed the core practices that enhanced counselling and psychotherapy, whereas only 15% disagreed. Most (78%) of the respondents strongly agreed that indigenous African society, in its multicultural context, reflects multiple differences and unique values that demand knowledge and understanding in relation to counselling and psychotherapy, compared with only 2% who disagreed, while 20% remained neutral. Most (67%) of the respondents agreed that counsellors and psychologists who used a narrative approach to understand the values and philosophy of African indigenous clients faced little or no resistance; however, 14% disagreed, while 19% were neutral.

4.2. The Implications of African Beliefs on Counselling and Psychotherapy

The second specific objective was to examine the implications of African beliefs on counselling and psychotherapy, and the study findings revealed as follows: Slightly more than half (53%) of the respondents agreed that beliefs has been a topic that evokes discomfort in social settings and are treated as taboos by African clients, as opposed to 32% of the respondents who thought otherwise, while 14.3% remained neutral. Close to half (46%) of the respondents agreed that in an indigenous African setting, group therapy was less accepted than individual counselling due to privacy meshed with a strong belief system, as opposed to 26% of the respondents who cited otherwise, while 29% remained neutral. Most (74%) of the respondents agreed with the assertion that many indigenous African clients were too inhibited to self-disclose, and that stereotyping, characterised by beliefs, was prevalent, while only 8% disagreed, and 18% remained neutral. The majority (86%) of respondents strongly agreed that self-disclosure with most indigenous African clients was difficult unless trust had been established by understanding their belief systems, compared with 14% who did not agree, while 10% remained neutral. Slightly less than half (45%) of the respondents agreed that African people's cognition in psychotherapy is defined by religious beliefs and way of life, compared with 32% who disagreed, while 22% remained neutral. An overwhelming majority (94%) of the respondents agreed that some indigenous African psychological issues were connected to their religious practices that were deeply influenced by belief systems, as opposed to 3% who did not agree with the assertion, while another 2% remained neutral.

Most (58%) of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that Western counselling practices had no role in the indigenous African belief system, while 16% agreed, and 25% remained neutral. Lastly, an overwhelming majority (96%) of respondents agreed that the study of indigenous African beliefs in counselling and psychology greatly contributed to understanding human nature across cultures, compared with a paltry 2% who disagreed and another 2% who remained neutral.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings above, it is imperative to conclude that for counselling and psychotherapy to be effective, learning and understanding are key. This can only be reinforced if there is conformity to psychotherapy as well as recognition of indigenous African values. All of these will go a long way toward advancing the African people's values, as they will inform core practices that enhance counselling and psychotherapy in addressing mental health issues. This is because indigenous African values exist in a multicultural context that reflects diversity and is unique, and therefore demands knowledge and understanding.

On the aspect of implications of African beliefs on counselling and psychotherapy, it is noteworthy that most often, beliefs as a topic evokes discomfort in many African social settings and is therefore treated as a taboo by African clients, thereby making it less acceptable in a group therapy setting. This can be attributed to a lack of self-disclosure and stereotyping that is often characterised by beliefs, being that psychological issues are intrinsically connected to the religious practices, which are deeply influenced by belief systems, some of which have been borrowed from Western counselling practices.

There is, therefore, a need for counselling and psychotherapy professionals to adhere to indigenous African protocols when addressing mental health issues, thereby significantly enhancing the success of counselling and psychotherapy by aligning clinical practice with the cultural, spiritual, and communal values of African clients.

5.1. Recommendations and Discuss Implications, Areas of Further Research

Counselling services support mental health in many facets, including anxiety and other psycho-social aspects of humanity, therefore:

- i. There is a need for counseling and psychotherapy to be firmly anchored in the African culture so as not only to show the relevance of African culture and values to the contemporary society but also to uphold the need for these values be critically assessed, and those found to be inimical to the mental well-being and holistic development of the society, be discarded. In this way, African culture and values can be re-evaluated, their relevance established and sustained to lend credence to authentic African identity, especially in the context of mental health.
- ii. For there to be effective counselling, therapists need to always acknowledge and validate unique African ethnic groups to be able to use a responsible therapeutic focus that will include knowledge of ethnic differences in the practice, as this will help them succeed in helping individuals resolve

identity conflicts in indigenous Africa. As the study of indigenous African beliefs in counselling and psychology greatly contributes to understanding human nature across cultures

iii. There is a great need to modify the application of mental health in therapy, and integrate it to accommodate the aspect of the African approach to psychotherapy in addressing mental health.

It is therefore essential that all the African psychotherapists should come together and make a decision on the aspect of the African way of dealing with mental health so that it can be wholly inculcated into counselling practice.

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