

EFFECTIVENESS OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY IN THE ATTITUDINAL CHANGE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARD EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in the attitudinal change of senior secondary school adolescents towards examination malpractice. To guide this study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses formulated. The study, a pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group quasi experiment. A sample of 15 senior secondary school students participated in the study. A twenty four-item Examination Malpractices Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) adopted from Aluta and Aluede (2006) was revalidated and administered on the sample to collect data for study. The internal consistency of instrument had a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.89, data collected were analyzed using t-test and mean score, the hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed statistically significant in attitudinal change of participants towards examination malpractice in the treatment group. It could be concluded that rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) is an effective method for the attitudinal change of its recipient towards examination malpractice. Some recommendations were made, that measures of examination anxiety could be used by counselors to identify students high on examination anxiety so that preventive or proactive counseling therapies could be administered on them before sitting for an examination. Counselors should administer REBT on students to reduce examination malpractice.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, rational emotive behaviour therapy, attitudinal change, Adolescents, examination malpractice, anxiety.*

Introduction

Education is the process of transmitting knowledge, skills and cultural values from one generation to the other for the development of the society and nation. This process could be formal or informal (Ossai, 2018). The people of the world have come to believe in education as the main instrument for national development and political stability (Olayinka and Akande, 2006). Education trains individuals who receive it for effective performance, equips them with information necessary for high level functioning. (Emaikwu, 2006). The school as the formal agent of education cultivates necessary skills, knowledge and values

as stated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education. The achievement of the objectives of education is done through constant evaluation assessment and the examination of the recipient of education. Examination is the instrument used worldwide for assessing individual's skills, knowledge and physical fitness in all areas of study in institution of learning. (Adekunle, 2003). Examination malpractice has been defined by Ossai (2014) as "the violation of rules and regulations governing the conduct of examination, in or outside the examination hall, they are acts which could occur before, during and or after an examination, they are usually intended to alter or give unfair advantage to candidates in that examination" (Ossai,2018). It involves all acts of dishonesty connected with examination administration, grading of candidates scripts.

West African Examinations Council. (2003). Sees examination malpractice as any unacceptable behaviour put up by candidates or officials charged with the responsibility of conducting examination before, during or after such examination. It also refers to actions carried out by persons involved in setting examination questions, typing examination questions, storing examination papers, administration of examination, marking of examination, grading and recording examination scores before, during or after examination that leads to falsification of scores derived from the examination or grants undue advantage to one or some examiners over others.

Banjo (2010). Noted that examination malpractice has assumed a frightening proportion in Nigeria (Ibikunle and Oyewole, 2011). It has become a grave concern to psychologists and educationists. Ossai (2004) argued that students nowadays are no longer hard working and dedicated towards their studies as there is no more emphasis on legitimate means and avenues used in achieving success. With so much emphasis on paper qualification than technical skills has taken over all important offices, examination malpractices is the major reason for the decline on the quality of education in the world. (Mamu, 2017) stressed that, Examination malpractice is not limited to Nigeria alone. He noted that examination malpractice has been reported in advanced countries like Britain, India, South Korea and China (Oganji, 2011) opined that. In Nigeria the history of examination malpractice could be traced to 1914 with the leakage of Cambridge examination. Examination malpractice spread wider in 1977 with the leakage of West African school certificate examination questions. To find solution to this problem, the Federal Government then set up special conferences at Ibadan in 1986 in which decrees were promulgated, schools, were sanctioned, results cancelled, invigilators arrested in the bid to curb examination malpractice, an example of such decree was decree No. 33 of 1999, but to no avail.

Students' attitude towards examination malpractice is no longer out of place, but a norm that is perceived as acceptable in many societies. Examination malpractice affects genuine learning leading to increase in the number of dishonest half-baked graduates, incessant cancellation of examinations result and production of quack professionals. Scholars have advanced some reasons for student involvement in examination malpractices. Nwafor (2006) noted that Students ill preparedness for exams, lack of study habits, the examination personnel, quota system, poor remuneration of teachers, location

of examination centres, Mustapha, (2006), noted that an individual's behaviours is determined by his belief system, changing an individual belief system will lead to changing the associated behaviours.

Machler (2004), (Ojogbane, 2016) this means that: if students can be made to think rationally using counselling therapies, they are likely to act against society's distorted beliefs of making its citizens to adopt counselling therapies in changing students attitudes towards, their irrational beliefs. One of such therapies to be used in this study is "Rational

Emotive Behaviour Therapy". (REBT). This counselling therapy was propounded by Albert Ellis who was born in 1913, had Dr. of philosophy (Ph.D), in clinical Psychology from Columbia University New York in 1949. The therapy's approach was originally called Rational Therapy; in 1959 it became known as Rational Emotive Therapy (RET). In 1992 it was changed to its current form, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) Posits that "there is nothing good or bad but the individuals thinking makes it so" Ellis as cited in (Ossai, 2012 p. 32). Further, he puts forward the perception about the human nature and personality that:- (i) Man is both rational and irrational (ii) Rational behaviour brings happiness while irrational behaviour or thinking leads to depression and psychological problems (iii) Man should maximize rational thinking, and minimize, irrational thinking in order to develop healthy personality and stable ego state. (iv) Man's thinking is related to his feelings as he perceives a situation the way he sees it. (v) Man is unequally rational and irrational (vi) Negative self-defeating thoughts and emotions must be attacked through cognitive restructuring of our perceptions and thinking. (vii) Though man is subject to powerful biological and social forces, he still has that potential to be rational (Ossai, 2018).

The Role of counselling therapy is to help the client develop the capacity to dispute, irrational thoughts, and beliefs and actions like "if I study hard. I will pass my exam, follow a well-planned study time table, and have a good studying group. What I don't understand I consult my teachers, practice my reading by using past examination questions. I will do excellently well in the forth-coming examination". This will result in the clients changing their illogical language and thought patterns from negative to more positive acceptable preferences. REBT promotes the use of humour, reducing dogged attachment to irrational beliefs modelling and role play could also be used in counselling session to guide the client in to more rational beliefs and thoughts (Ossai, 2018).

Evidence from literature, experimentally proved that rational emotive behavior Therapy is effective in changing irrational beliefs and associated behaviours, Wrong values and curbing examination malpractices behaviours. The studies of Gonzeles, Nelson, Gutkin, Sunders, Galloway and Craig (2004) Lends credence to the fact that REBT has a significant positive change on children and adolescents. In another study Omiegun (2003) applied REBT and SQ3R Study method in changing students attitudes towards examination malpractice on a sample of 300 selected Secondary school students (150 males and 150 females) randomly selected from a total population of all secondary schools in Lagos Mainland Local Education District. The result showed that REBT was effective in changing students attitudes towards, examination malpractice. This assertion is further supported by Flak (1998) in a study carried out to determine the efficacy of group counselling intervention employing short term rational emotive behaviour therapy in

altering belief, wrong values, attitudes and behaviours. In a recent study of Igbineweka and Isele (2018) in Edo State, Esan West Local Government Area supported the assertion of efficacy of REBT in the attitudinal change of secondary school students towards examination malpractice, in their study using a sample population of 165 students, male and female out of 2645 students drawn from 15 public schools proved the efficacy of REBT in changing the attitude of students towards examination malpractice. However to the best knowledge of the researcher there is the dearth of literature as regards Studies which seek to examine the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Changing Senior Secondary School students' attitude towards examination malpractice in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria a gap where this study intends to fill.

Statement of the Problem

Examination no doubt is the major instrument for assessing students' performance in all institutions of learning for promotion to the next class or level of education. A close observation exposes the fact that students, no longer show any seriousness attached to taking examination, they no longer prepare for writing examination as a result of laziness, poor study habits misplaced values wrong priorities, crave for wealth, lack of motivation from the teachers, parents and society. Above all the premium placed on paper qualification at the expense of actual skills possessed. This may have oriented students towards the acquisition of Certificates using all means including examination malpractice. No doubt Examination malpractice is a product of wrong values promoted in the society the quest for certificates instead of knowledge and the technical Know-how or practical skills. This has become great concern to stakeholders in education. Hence this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in changing attitude towards examination malpractice among secondary School students in Nigeria with researchers focus on Okpe Local Government Area Delta State.

Research Questions

1. Is there any difference between the pre-test and post test scores of students attitude towards examination malpractices exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy.
2. Is there any difference in students attitude towards examination Malpractice exposed to rational Emotive Behaviour therapy and these not exposed to it?

Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no difference between the pre-test and post test scores of students attitude towards examination malpractice exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour therapy.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in students attitude towards Examination malpractice exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviours and these not exposed to it.

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adapted the pre-test, post nonequivalent control group quasi experimental design. The study consisted of two independent variables which are Rational

Emotive Behaviour Therapy and the control group. While the dependent variable is attitude towards examination malpractice.

Population of the Study: The population of the study was 2989 (Two Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty Nine) Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in fifteen (15) public mixed senior secondary schools in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State, this was made up of male and female students. (Source: Statistics Department Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Sapele Field Office, after Mission Road Junction Ogorode Road, Sapele, (2018.)

The sample of this study comprises of 118 students drawn from Senior Secondary School class two in the fifteen public mixed secondary school in Okpe Local Government Area of Delta State using balloting without replacement technique. The names of the fifteen public schools were written on paper, folded and put in a ballot box container out of which two schools were picked from which the samples for the study was drawn through randomization. The first school picked constituted the experimental group (School A), the second school became the Control group (School B). School A was exposed to REBT treatment and school B the non-attention groups was group C the (placebo), all groups studied in their intact classes.

Research Instrument: The research instrument for data collection for this study was the standardized Test on Examination Malpractice, perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) adopted from Alutu and Aluede (2006). The instrument consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A of the instrument constituted the respondents demographic data included gender, age, parents socio-economic background, while section B constituted 24 items elicited responses on students perception on attitude towards examination malpractice. The instrument which has been earlier tested for its reliability by Alutu and Aluede (2006) was further tested by the researcher to ensure consistency using the Cronbach Alpha Statistical method. The reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained.

Procedure: The participant were tested with the instrument to collect baseline scores, thereafter, the intact classes of students in the two randomly selected schools were assigned to the two treatment groups – Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and the Control. The groups met once a week for a period of eight weeks, during which participants in the group counselling sessions were exposed to the treatment they learnt in the group therapies. Each session lasted for forty – five minutes. A convenient time and venue was chosen by each of the groups. Confidentially among members regarding group procedures was emphasized and members encouraged not to be absent from sessions. At the end of the treatment period the Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) was re-administrated on the participant to determine if the difference are significant, hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using paired t-test and mean scores.

Results

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students' attitude towards examination malpractices exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy.

Table 1: Paired Sample Statistics of Pre-test and Post-Test Scores of Students Attitude Towards Examination Malpractice Exposed to REBT

Assessments	N	Means	S.D	dF	t.cal	P(Sig)
Pre-test	31	53.64	6.34	30	2.88	.007
Post-test	31	61.80	16.58			

Sig at P<0.005

Table 1 reveals that significant difference exists in the pre-test and post-test scores of students attitude towards examination malpractice exposed to REBT ($t = 2.88$, $P = .007$). The null hypothesis which says, there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores if the students attitude towards examination malpractice exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy is rejected. This implies that the significant difference is in favour of the post test scores.

Table 2: Descriptive Effect of Therapy in Test Anxiety Reduction at Post-Test

Post-Test	N	Mean	STd. Deviation
REBT	31	61.8065	13.58533
CONTROL	87	56.3448	8.292337

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation for the group at post-test. The table reveals that the participants in the REBT treatment group had the score of (61.80) and the Control group (56.34). The REBT group (61.80) is higher than the Control group mean of (56.34) thus indicating an increase in the attitudinal change of the participants in the (REBT) group towards examination malpractice. This showed that there were differences in the attitudinal change of participants in the two treatment groups towards examination malpractice.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in students' attitude towards examination malpractice exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and those not exposed to it.

Table 3: t-test Statistics of Post-test Scores of Students Attitude towards Examination Malpractice Exposed to REBT and Control group

Assessments	N	Means	S.D	dF	t.cal	P(Sig)
REBT	31	62.83	8.25	116	5.63	0.00
Control	87	53.64	6.34			

Sig at P<0.005

Table 3 shows that significant difference exist in the post-test scores of Students' attitude towards examination malpractice exposed to REBT and Control group ($t = 5.63, P = 0.00$). The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the significant difference is in favour of the treatment group.

Discussion of Result and Implication for Guidance Counsellors

The result of the study reveals that there is difference in the post test scores of students exposed to the REBT treatment with the post-test mean higher than the pre-test mean. Thus lending credence to earlier assertion that REBT has been experimentally proved to be effective for changing irrational belief and associated behaviours, wrong values and curbing examination malpractice behaviours (Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin Saunders, Galloway and Craig, 2004).

REBT was also found to be significantly effective in increasing the attitudinal change of its recipients towards examination malpractice. The result corroborates Omoegun (2000) and Flak (1998), they both found REBT to be effective in changing students attitude towards examination malpractice in altering beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of at risk adolescents.

The result of the study of Igbineweka and Isele (2018) on the efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the attitudinal change of secondary school adolescents towards examination malpractice, altering irrational beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours of adolescent students towards examination malpractices was in line with Onyechere (2004) who found REBT in their studies to be effective in changing adolescents attitude towards examination malpractice.

Finding of the study have some implications for the counselling profession. Preventive or proactive counselling approaches should be adopted by guidance Counsellor to orientate students prone to examination malpractice, such as time management through having a personal time table. Study skills, Teacher Consultation, examination taking techniques reorientation for students. Proactive Counselling refers to professional services provided by a trained guidance Counsellor to prevent students from engaging in examination malpractice through the objective assessment of study habits prior to sitting for examinations (Ossai. 2004).

Conclusion

From the result of this study, it could be agreed that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is an effective method for the attitudinal change of senior secondary school students towards examination malpractice. It also showed that examination malpractice which is inimical to the achievement of educational objectives is prevalent in schools and can be reduced and subsequently eradicated using Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in promoting appropriate attitudinal change among students. Schools counsellors should employ this method regularly to help students eradicate this behaviour. Counsellors should be effectively trained on how to use Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy. In treatment of attitudinal change of students towards examination malpractice using larger samples and different gender populations.

Recommendations

To reduce the level of examination anxiety and examination malpractices the following Recommendations were made:

1. Standardized examination anxiety inventories be made available for counsellors.
2. Counsellors should be trained on procedures for scanning, administration, scoring and interpretation of scores of standardized examination anxiety inventories in relation to student's attitude towards examination anxiety.
3. Measures of students' examination anxiety and attitudes towards examination malpractice could be used to identify students who are likely to engage in examination malpractice and for counselling referral.
4. Re-orientation programmes and proactive Counselling should be organized for students who show tendencies to engage in examination malpractice.
5. REBT should be organized for students who shown high level of anxiety in examination situation.

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