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EFFECT OF SELF-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE ON SOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Imo State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Quasi-experimental research was adopted in carrying out the study. The population of the study was 397 JS2 and SS2 students identified with social maladjustment in all the public secondary schools in Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State, and the sample size was 84 students from the three sampled schools in Njaba. The sample was derived using multi-stage sampling procedure based on the number of coeducational schools that scored high on Social Adjustment Scale. The Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) was used for data collection. The instrument was reliable at 0.90 coefficient. Data relating to research questions were analyzed using statistical mean, while data relating to hypotheses were analyzed using Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA). Findings from the study revealed that self-management technique was significantly effective on social maladjustment among the secondary school students. The findings also showed that self-management technique was more effective on social maladjustment among female and senior students, respectively. Finally, the findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the effectiveness of self-management technique on social maladjustment among students who participated in the experiment based on gender and class level. The researchers therefore recommended that school counsellors should be constantly trained and retrained through organized conferences, seminars and workshops on the use of self-management technique in treating clients who are socially maladjusted.

Keywords: Self-management, technique, social maladjustment, students, Imo state

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of societal development. It is the key that unlocks the door of development, modernization, civilization, and industrialization of any nation. For education to effectively take place there must be a form of interaction between individuals of different levels of knowledge and experience. Perhaps, through this interaction, people shape their lives and learn how to fit into their society. Hence, for individuals including students to thrive properly as productive members of any society, they must be willing and able to interact freely with their social environment. Since a school is a social cluster, all students are expected to be interactive, lively and able to maintain good social relationships with their peers, classmates and teachers. However, experience from daily observation shows that some students find it difficult to interact freely with people around them. Such students rarely engage in social interactions with others possibly because they feel unworthy and incapable to handle social situations. Thus, they perform poorly in social activities, and as such are regarded as being socially maladjusted.

Social adjustment is defined as people's ability to communicate with others in the social environment, with a view to create a balance between their role in the society and how they play such role (Dehghnnezhad, Hajhosseini & Ejei, 2017). It is the degree to which an individual engages in competent social behaviour and adapts to the immediate social context (Romera, Gomez & Ortega, 2016). Forsgren and Sillanp (2020) defined social adjustment as a psychological term used to describe an individual's ability to function in different social roles. Social adjustment enhances people's ability to behave in accordance with the norms, ethics, and value that will strengthen their survival so as to meet the social expectations of the social environment. In contrast, when an individual lacks the ability to relate with others, they may find it so difficult to function effectively in their social environment.

Social maladjustment is defined as a breakdown in the process of maintaining constructive social relationships (APA, 2018). It is a persistent pattern of violating social norms with lots of truancy, substance abuse, a perpetual struggle with authority, as well as a tendency to be easily frustrated, impulsive and manipulating (Derogatis, 2020). According to Briones (2017), social maladjustment is a situation whereby an individual is unable to successfully satisfy social needs, which establishes an imbalance between his personal needs and expectation of the society resulting in the disturbance of psycho-equilibrium. For the purpose of this study, social maladjustment is

defined as the inability of a student to conform to the standards for behaviour established by the school and society.

Practically, as a multi-dimensional construct that includes several motivational substrates, such as shyness, unsociability and social avoidance, social adjustment influences students in various ways (Zhu, Xiao, Hipson, Yan, Coplan & Li, 2021). In trying to buttress this point, Pollastri, Raftery-Helmer, Cardemil and Addis (2018) opined that social adjustment facilitates people's capacity to accommodate the demands, restrictions, and norms of society, including the ability to live and work with others harmoniously and to engage in satisfying interactions and relationships. Also, Njoku and Akaninwor (2019) in their study reported that socially adjusted students show enough capacity to successfully build close relationship with peers and always feel comfortable in meeting new people. This makes them feel worthy and capable in adapting to new social standards and values which encourages their acceptance by the society. Conversely, students who are socially maladjusted tend to feel rejected, isolated and generally find it very difficult to relate with their peers. A study by (Romera, Gomez & Ortega, 2016) showed that socially maladjusted students have low levels of social competence, acceptance and popularity. This may be why Anyamene, Ejichukwu and Azuji (2019) stated that the concern on social maladjustment of students is based on the notion that students' social dimension deals with their interpersonal or public interactions with other individuals. Social maladjustment may inhibit positive social interactions and reduces social opportunities which could possibly lead to difficulties in interpersonal relationships among students.

Socially maladjusted students manifest maladaptive behaviours such as persistent violation of social norms, truancy, substance abuse and impulsivity (Mariamma, 2020). This tends to dent the educational system with the suggestion that socially maladapted individuals are being churn out of schools, instead of well-adjusted individuals which the stipulated lofty national educational goals and objectives were designed to produce. Therefore, the issue of social maladjustment has remained a source of concern to a range of stakeholders, especially parents who are concerned with their children's welfare, teachers/school administrators who are concerned with retention rates, students striving to succeed and mental health professionals, such as counsellors and psychologists who help students overcome challenges in adjustment.

Moreso, students, especially those in the secondary schools are faced with social problems with attendant academic problems that seem to have become part and parcel of their lives. Previous researchers have expressed great concern about the problem of social maladjustment among secondary school students. For example, Chigbu, Oguzie and Obi (2021b) in their study reported that social maladjustment is common among secondary school students. Also, a study conducted by Nwosu and Chinweuba (2021) showed that many secondary school students are finding it difficult to adjust socially. In the same vein, report from the work of Oguzie, Obi, Nnadi, Nwobi and Okpala (2023) indicated that 16.3% of secondary school students in Imo state are socially maladjusted despite various socializing programmes provided by the state's school curriculum.

Social maladjustment among students has been found to be significantly correlated with gender and class level. For example, Oguzie, Obi, Nnadi, Nwobi and Okpala (2023) reported that social maladjustment is more present in female than male students. In a contrary report, Rubin and Barstead (2018) in their study found that social maladjustment is greater in males compared to females. However, Oladipo and Idemudia (2014) had a contrary view on the gender difference in social maladjustment, as they reported that there was not significant gender and age difference in social maladjustment among students. Moreso, studies have shown that the number of socially maladjusted students in junior classes is far greater than the senior level (Oguzie, Obi, Nnadi, Nwobi & Okpala, 2023).

The problem of social maladjustment has become a worrisome phenomenon because of its tendency to affect students' overall output in school and the likelihood that they may resort to anti-social behaviours like drug use and abuse, robbery, alcoholism, withdrawal from social situations among others, as coping mechanisms. Therefore, this problem needs immediate intervention as to enable students achieve their maximum potential as enshrined in the national objectives of education. There is no doubt that social maladjustment is a behaviour problem, which would require an array of behaviour intervention approaches for its solution. Consequent of this, one of the behaviour modification techniques that may be used to enable students to overcome the problem of social maladjustment is self-management technique.

Self-management technique (SMT) refers to the methods, skills and strategies with which individuals can effectively direct their own activities towards achieving set goes. It is a technique derived from the social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1986), which provided a

theoretical basis for the development of model of self-regulated learning in which personal contextual and behavioural factors interact in such a way that gives students an opportunity to control their behaviour. According to Oguzie, Obi and Nnadi (2019), self-management technique is a behaviour intervention process that enables clients to alter their personal behaviours by the use of certain newly learned skills and by rearranging their environment. For the purpose of this study, self-management technique is defined as a behaviour intervention measure which may be used to help clients to achieve adequate self-awareness and self-control in order to function effectively in their social and academic environment. Some steps involved in self-management technique include goal setting, planning, scheduling, self-intervention, self-evaluation and self-development.

In practical terms, the use of self-management technique warrants that clients are given the opportunity to guide, direct and regulate their own behaviour. Unachukwu and Iweanya (2021) affirmed that self-management technique provides individuals the ability to use awareness of their emotions to actively choose what to say or do. The technique builds upon a foundational skill of self-awareness possibly because individuals can only choose how to respond to an emotion actively when they are aware of it. When self-management technique is effectively applied, it could enable clients to adequately manage and fit in properly in their social and academic environment.

Researches indicated that self-management technique has being very useful in treating various maladaptive behaviours among students (Oguzie, Obi & Nnadi, 2019). A study by Unachukwu and Iweanya (2021) showed that self-management technique was significantly effective in reducing problem behaviour among students. Newcombe and Locke (2015) acknowledged that people who lack adequate self-management skills are more vulnerable to both the external social influences and internal psychological processes that may reduce their level of sociability. Through self-management training, students could be taught skills than can promote social skills like tolerance, compassion, problem solving skill, empathy and anger management. Therefore, the current researcher believes that training students with self-management technique would help them to learn necessary skills that would facilitate their ability to relate effectively with others and function optimally in their social environment.

In the recent past, a good number of researchers (Anyamene, Obi & Okpala, 2023) have investigated the possible factors that cause social maladjustment without due priority to the

counselling intervention techniques that can be used in reducing the problem among students. Perhaps, this is the reason why the problem of social maladjustment still remains a source of worry to students, parents, educationists and society in general. Due to the increase in the rate of social maladjustment among students, there is need to explore effective behaviour modification strategies to help students overcome social maladjustment and become able to function maximally as active members of the society. Hence, the current study was set out to ascertain the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students when compared with those who received conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest mean scores?
2. What is the difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among male and female secondary school students using their pretest and posttest mean scores?
3. What is the difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among junior and senior secondary school students using their pretest and posttest mean scores?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

1. There is no is significant difference in the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students when compared with those who received conventional counselling using their posttest scores.
2. There is no significant difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among male and female secondary school students using their posttest scores.
3. There is no significant difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among junior and senior secondary school students using their posttest scores.

Methods

This study adopted a non-randomized pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental research design. The design is called quasi experimental because it does not employ randomisation in the placement of participants into experimental and control groups. According to Nworgu (2015), a quasi-experimental study is a type of experimental study that determines the effect of a treatment paradigm on a non-randomised sample. The study was carried out in Imo State. The population of the study comprised all 397 JS2 and SS2 students identified with social maladjustment. The sample for the study consisted of 84 secondary school students that were identified with social maladjustment. This was drawn from JS2 and SS2 students from the two chosen coeducational secondary schools Njaba local government area using multi-stage sampling procedure.

The instrument that was used for measuring students' social maladjustment in this study is the Social Adjustment Scale (SAS) developed by Fudah in (2008). The internal consistency of the instrument ranges from 0.70 to 0.84, with an overall reliability coefficient Cronbach's alpha of 0.90. The Social Adjustment Scale was administered to the students in the chosen schools for this study by the researchers with the help of two research assistants. The research assistants collected the instrument from the respondents and handed them over to the researchers for scoring. The results from the first administered SAS formed the pre-test scores while the results from the second administered SAS formed the post-test scores. Data to be collected for this study were organised in tables and analysed. Arithmetic mean was used in answering the research questions and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest social adjustment mean scores of secondary school students treated with self-management technique when compared with those who received conventional counselling

N = 82.50

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gained Mean	Remark
SMT	45	66.93	123.29	56.36	Effective
Control	39	63.77	77. 13	13.36	

Table 1 showed that the secondary school students treated with self-management technique have pretest social adjustment mean score of 66.93 and posttest mean score of 123.29 with gained mean score of 56.36, while those in the control group who received conventional counselling had pretest mean score of 63.77 and posttest mean score of 77.13 with gained mean of 13.36. With a posttest mean score of 123.29 for SMT which is above the norm of 82.50, self-management technique is effective on secondary school students' social maladjustment.

Table 2: ANCOVA on the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students when compared with those who received conventional counselling

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	53694.581	2	26847.291			
Intercept	1918.329	1	1918.329			
Pretest Scores	9175.899	1	9175.899			
Treatment Model	37412.468	1	37412.468	110.014	.000	S
Error	27545.705	81	340.070			
Total	952730.000	84				
Corrected Total	81240.286	83				

Table 2 revealed that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 83df denominator, the calculated F is 110.014 with Pvalue of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected. So, the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students is significant when compared with those who received conventional counselling.

Table 3: Pretest and Posttest social adjustment mean scores of male and female students treated with self-management technique

N = 82.50

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gained Mean	Remark
Male	19	67.89	120.89	53.00	
Female	26	66.23	125.04	58.81	More effective

In Table 3 it was observed that the male students treated with self-management technique had pretest social adjustment mean score of 67.89 and posttest mean score of 120.89 with gained mean 53.00, while the female students had pretest social adjustment mean score of 66.23 and posttest mean score of 125.04 with gained mean 58.81. With gained mean scores of 58.81 for

females as against 53.00 for male students, SMT was more effective in enhancing female students' social adjustment.

Table 4: ANCOVA on the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among male and female secondary school students

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	8214.451	2	4107.226			
Intercept	229.890	1	229.890			
Pretest Scores	8025.958	1	8025.958			
Gender	460.157	1	460.157	2.169	0.148	NS
Error	8910.793	42	212.162			
Total	701132.000	45				
Corrected Total	17125.244	44				

Table 4 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 44df denominator, the calculated F is 2.169 with Pvalue of 0.148 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is accepted. So, there is no significant difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among male and female secondary school students using their posttest scores.

Table 5: Pretest and Posttest social adjustment mean scores of junior and senior students treated with self-management technique

N = 82.50

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gained Mean	Remark
Junior	24	68.00	121.79	53.79	
Senior	21	65.71	125.00	59.29	More effective

From data in table 5 it was observed that the junior students treated with self-management technique had pretest social adjustment mean score of 68.00 and posttest mean score of 121.79 with gained mean 53.79, while the senior students had pretest social adjustment mean score of 65.71 and posttest mean score of 125.00 with gained mean 59.29. With gained mean scores of 59.29 for senior students as against 53.79 for junior students, SMT was more effective in enhancing senior students' social adjustment.

Table 6: ANCOVA on the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among junior and seniorsecondary school students

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	8216.436	2	4108.173			
Intercept	11.414	1	11.414			
Pretest Scores	8101.059	1	8101.059			

Class Level	462.052	1	462.052	2.178	0.147	NS
Error	8908.899	42	212.117			
Total	701132.000	45				
Corrected Total	17125.244	44				

Table 6 showed that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 44df denominator, the calculated F is 2.178 with Pvalue of 0.147 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the third null hypothesis is accepted. So, there is no significant difference in the effects of self-management technique on social maladjustment among junior and senior secondary school students using their posttest scores.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study revealed that self-management technique was effective on social maladjustment among secondary school students as compared to those in the conventional counselling group. Initially, the pretest scores as shown in the result relating to the first research question indicated that students in both self-management technique and conventional counselling groups were socially maladjusted before the commencement of the study. However, the result revealed that after the treatment, there was clear difference in the magnitude of the mean scores between the self-management and conventional counselling groups as measured in the post-test.

Moreso, the test of null hypothesis one indicated that students in the self-management technique group reported a significant increase in their social adjustment than those in the conventional counselling group. This possibly showed that students in the self-management technique group, through the training were able to learn necessary skills that may have facilitate their ability to relate effectively with people around them. This finding is consistent with prior researches that reported that self-management technique was effective in treating maladaptive behaviours such as social maladjustment among students (Cavalier, Ferreti & Hodge, 2019; Oguzie, Obi & Nnadi, 2019; Unachukwu & Iweanya, 2021).

The possible reason for the increase in social adjustment among students in the self-management technique treatment group than those in the conventional counselling group might be due to the numerous self-enhancing exercises which the students were exposed to, during the experiment. Possibly, the self-management training exercise may have enabled the students in the group to develop the necessary skills and capacity for empirically examining and controlling their behaviour during social encounters.This is true because, during the self-management training, the research assistant taught the students strategies such as self-monitoring, self-control, self-recording, self-reward and self-punishment, which may have encouraged them to carefully

examine their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and emotions during social situations and thereby gain full control over themselves.

Another finding of this study revealed that self-management technique was more effective on social maladjustment among female secondary school students. The results relating to research question four indicated that self-management technique differed in its effectiveness on social maladjustment among the male and female students. This suggests that the female students who participated in the treatment benefited more from self-management technique than the males. This finding is in agreement with the previous finding by (Igbokwe, 2019; Oguzie, Obi & Nnadi, 2019; Unachukwu & Iweanya, 2021) who found that self-management technique was more effective on maladaptive behaviours among female participants than the males. This finding also supported the report of previous research by Ekenwe (2018) who concluded that female participants benefited from self-management technique treatment than the male participants.

However, this finding of the study contradicted the previous finding by Long, Milcheva and Vassileva (2018) who concluded that male participants benefited more from self-management technique than the females. This indicates that there is every possibility that male students may benefit more from self-management technique than female students if experimental conditions are varied. It may also mean that the magnitude of difference in the effects of self-management technique between the male and female participants is small. This negligible difference reflects in the test of null hypothesis four which indicated that although female students benefited more from the self-management technique treatment, the gender difference was not significant. Therefore, male students can benefit as much as female students during self-management training treatments.

Finally, the findings of this study indicated that self-management technique was more effective in enhancing the social adjustment of the senior secondary school students. It was found that self-management technique differs in its effectiveness on social adjustment among the junior and senior students. This suggests that the senior students who participated in the experiment benefited more from self-management technique treatment. This finding is in agreement with the previous finding by (Igbokwe, 2019; Unachukwu & Iweanya, 2021) who concluded that senior participants benefited more from self-management technique than the junior participants. The reason for the greater benefit obtained by the senior students may be because they were old enough to quickly understand the various self-management strategies they were taught during the

experiment and were more mature to make decisions that helped them control their behaviour better in social situations. However, the test of null hypothesis six with respect to class level difference indicated that although senior students benefited more from the experiment, the difference was not significant based on class level. This finding supports the report of previous research by Ekenwe (2018) who concluded that there is no significant difference in the effects of self-management technique based on class level.

Conclusions

This study investigated the effect of self-management technique on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Imo state. In accordance with the findings of this study, it was concluded that self-management was significantly effective on social maladjustment among the students who participated in the experimental treatment. It was also concluded that there was gender and class level difference in the effectiveness of self-management technique on social maladjustment among students who participated in the experiment, concluding that self-management technique was more effective in enhancing female and senior secondary school students' social adjustment, respectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Self-management technique among other techniques should be formally adopted by counsellors in treating social maladjustment among students.
2. School counsellors should be constantly trained and retrained through organized conferences, seminars and workshops on the use of self-management technique in treating clients who are socially maladjusted.
3. Parents should encourage their children to participate in social activities such as games, debates and other group functions.

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