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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING TECHNIQUE ON POOR STUDY BEHAVIOUR AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY STUDENTS IN AWKA-SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on the poor study behaviour of public secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quasi-experimental research design involving a non-randomized pretest-posttest control group design. Four research questions guided the study, while four null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The population comprised 2,400 Senior Secondary one (SSI) and Senior Secondary two (SSII) students from 15 co-educational public secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. A sample of 67 students identified as having poor study behaviour was selected purposively. Data were collected using the Study Behaviour Inventory (SBI) developed by Akinboye (1977). The instrument, being standardized, was not subjected to face and content validation. However, its internal consistency reliability coefficient of 0.874, established by Ilo, Nwankwo and Unachukwu (2020), was adopted for the study. Data were collected through the direct administration method. Mean scores were used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The norm score of 74 served as the decision benchmark for identifying students with poor study behaviour. Participants in the experimental group received cognitive restructuring treatment, whereas those in the control group received conventional counselling. The finding revealed that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in reducing poor study behaviour and significantly enhanced the study behaviour of secondary school students. Based on the finding, it was recommended that school counsellors should integrate cognitive restructuring technique into school counselling programmes to address poor study behaviour among students. Counsellors should also assist students in identifying and challenging irrational thoughts, developing positive thinking patterns, and adopting effective study behaviour. Furthermore, schools should promote cognitive behavioural interventions and other evidence-based counselling strategies to improve students' study behaviour and academic success.

Keywords: Effect, cognitive restructuring, technique, study behaviour, students, counselling.

Introduction

Study behaviour plays a significant role in determining students' academic success. Good study behaviours such as effective time management, regular reading, concentration, note-taking, completion of assignments and adequate examination preparation enhance learning and improve academic performance. However, poor study behaviour has become a major educational concern among secondary school students. Poor study behavior is refers to inappropriate learning practices exhibited by students towards their studies, which affect their academic achievement. It is often manifested in poor time management, irregular reading habits, poor concentration, procrastination, etc. Consequently, students with poor study behaviour are more likely to experience poor academic performance, examination malpractice, truancy, dropout, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, which hinder their educational and personal development.

The persistent poor academic performance of secondary school students has continued to attract the attention of educators, counsellors, parents, and other stakeholders in the education sector. Bertoni and Di Maio (2017) observed that the academic standard in educational institutions has fallen considerably below societal expectations.

Reports of students' performance in external examinations further demonstrate the need to address factors associated with poor study behaviour among secondary school students. According to Punch E-paper (March 27, 2026), the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reported that only 32.72% of candidates who sat for the 2026 Computer-Based West African Senior School Certificate Examination (CB-WASSCE) for private candidates obtained credit passes in at least five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics, while 67.28% failed to attain the minimum benchmark. These recurring fluctuations and declines in students' performance suggest that many secondary school students continue to experience learning challenges that may be associated with poor study behaviour and therefore require appropriate educational and counselling interventions. Researchers have identified several factors that contribute to poor study behaviour among secondary school students. These include poor time management, low self-efficacy, inappropriate cognitive patterns, poor listening skills, noisy learning environments and teachers' lukewarm attitude towards instructional activities. Welsh (2017) further reported that poor teaching methods and teachers' attitudes towards their duties contribute to students' academic task procrastination, which in turn adversely affects their study behaviour. Musah and Umar (2017) reported that ineffective study behaviour contributes substantially to students' poor performance in external examinations. The persistence of these factors suggests that poor study behaviour is a multifaceted problem that requires effective counselling interventions capable of addressing both the behavioural and cognitive processes underlying students' learning habits.

The persistent nature of poor study behaviour among secondary school students has prompted counsellors and educators to seek more effective intervention strategies capable of improving students' learning behaviours. Consequently, various counselling programmes have been implemented to assist students in developing good study behaviour, effective time

management skills, etc. Scheel, Stabb, Cohn, Duan and Sauer (2018), as well as Vehviläinen and Souto (2022), recommended counselling intervention programmes including conventional counselling programmes as effective approaches for assisting students experiencing academic and adjustment difficulties.

Conventional counselling often addresses students' problems generally and may not adequately target the maladaptive thoughts and irrational beliefs that influence students' learning behaviours. The continued prevalence of poor study behaviour therefore suggests the need to explore more focused and evidence-based counselling interventions capable of addressing the cognitive processes underlying students' academic behaviours and one such intervention is Cognitive Restructuring Technique (CRT).

Cognitive restructuring technique is a cognitive-behavioural intervention that focuses on identifying, challenging, and replacing irrational, distorted, and negative patterns of thinking with more realistic, rational, and adaptive thoughts (Jees, John & Linda, 2017). Through cognitive restructuring, such dysfunctional thoughts are identified, disputed, and replaced with more constructive beliefs that encourage positive study behaviour and improved academic adjustment.

Empirical evidence has demonstrated the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique in modifying maladaptive thoughts and behaviours among students. For instance, the finding supported the previous studies of Egbonike and Nwankwo (2021), found that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in reducing academic task procrastination among secondary school students. In addition, the finding confirmed the work of Sheu (2022) who carried-out a study on the effect of cognitive restructuring and test wiseness training on test anxiety among newly admitted undergraduate students of Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State. These findings from previous empirical studies have found that cognitive restructuring is an intervention in reducing academic task procrastination, academic failure, positive attitudes towards lying among students and mathematics anxiety. These findings suggest that cognitive restructuring technique has considerable potential for modifying maladaptive behaviours among students and may therefore be effective in reducing poor study behaviour.

Furthermore, there is a paucity of empirical studies on the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour among public secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. These gaps in the literature justify the need for the present study. Therefore, this study investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour among public secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Background literature seems to establish the effect of cognitive restructuring technique in solving academic and other problems and there is limited empirical evidence on its effectiveness

in reducing poor study behaviour among public secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. It is against this background that this study was undertaken to determine the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour among public secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of cognitive restructuring on poor study behaviour of secondary school students in Awka-South Local Government Area and the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour of secondary school students when compared with those treated with conventional counselling using their pre-test and post-test scores.

Significance of the Study

The finding of this study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on counselling interventions for improving students' study behaviour. Specifically, the study is expected to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique in reducing poor study behaviour among public secondary school students. The finding will therefore be of value to school counsellors, students, school administrators, parents, educational policymakers, scholars, and future researchers in the field of guidance and counselling.

Research Question

This research question guided the study:

What is the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on study behaviour of secondary school students when compared with those given conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest scores?

Hypothesis

This null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 statistical level of significance:

There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of secondary school students treated with cognitive restructuring technique when compared with those given conventional counselling on their study behaviour.

Methods

The research design adopted for this study is a quasi-experimental research design. The reason for choosing this research design was because this study was conducted in a school setting where it would not likely possible to use pure experimental design as it could lead to a

disruption of school activities. The quasi-experimental design includes the experimental group (E) and the control group (C), while the treatment is cognitive restructuring and the control group will receive conventional counselling. The study was conducted in Awka-South Local Government Area, Anambra State. Anambra State is located in the South East Geo-political Zone of Nigeria.

The population consists of seven hundred and four (*704*) SS1 students and SSII students with poor study behaviour. These are senior secondary school students in co-educational public secondary schools in Awka-South Local Government Area with poor study behaviour through it's cues. A purposive sampling technique was employed at two stages. First, two public co-educational secondary schools were purposively selected from the fifteen (15) public co-educational secondary schools in the Local Government Area. Thus, all sixty-seven (67) students identified through the screening process constituted the sample for the study in the two selected schools.

The instrument used for data collection was the Study Behaviour Inventory (SBI) developed by Akinboye (1977). The instrument was adopted for the study because it is specifically designed to assess the study behaviour of secondary school students. It is a self-report inventory that measures students' study behaviour and identifies those with poor, moderate, and effective study behaviour. The Study Behaviour Inventory (SBI) consists of two sections. Section A elicits respondents' demographic information, including age, sex, religion, nationality, state, and town of origin. Section B comprises twenty-five (25) items that assess students' study behaviour. The items are rated on a five-point Likert -type scale ranging from Least Likely (1), Likely (2), Justly Likely (3), Somewhat Likely (4) and Most Likely (5). Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which each statement described their study behaviour.

Study Behaviour Inventory (SBI) developed by Akinboye (1977) did not report the internal consistency reliability coefficient of the instrument but the inventory was validated by Ilo, et al (2020), using 50 Nigerian SS11 students in Enugu State public secondary schools. It is a standardized instrument. The data collected were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability technique, which yielded a coefficient of 0.874. This coefficient indicates that the instrument has high internal consistency and is therefore considered reliable for measuring students' study behaviour.

The data collection process was done in two phases pretest which involved collection of data before treatment and posttest which involved collection of data after treatment. The researcher visited two co-educational secondary schools in Awka Education Zone and 2,400 copies of the questionnaire titled ''Study Behaviour Scale (SBS)'' where the research assistant who were their school counsellors and were trained on research process helped him to distributed the questionnaires to the students.

The data collected were compiled and analysed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS), to answer the research questions and the hypothesis. The research questions were answered using mean scores while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using the Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA), to determine the statistical significance of the difference between the variables of study. The acceptable norm is score of 75 and above, which are acceptable as having good study behaviour.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the field for this study were analyzed and the summaries were presented in tables to highlight the finding. Then the finding was discussed.

Research Question

What is the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour of secondary school students when compared to those exposed to conventional counselling technique using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test poor study behaviour mean scores of secondary students treated with cognitive restructuring technique and those treated with conventional counselling (Norm = 74)

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain Mean	Remark
Cognitive restructuring Technique	34	66.97	91.29	24.32	Effective
Conventional Couns. Tech.	33	69.52	73.28	3.76	

Table 1 shows that the secondary school students treated with cognitive restructuring technique had a pre-test mean score of 66.97 and a post-test mean score of 91.29, resulting in a mean gain of 24.32. In contrast, students in the control group who received conventional counselling had a pre-test mean score of 69.52 and a post-test mean score of 73.28, with a mean gain of 3.76. Since the post-test mean score of 91.29 for the experimental group is higher than the instrument's norm score of 74.00, it indicates that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in improving the study behaviour of secondary school students in Awka-South Local Government Area.

Null hypothesis

The effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour of secondary school students will not be significant when compared with those treated with conventional counselling using their post-test mean scores.

Table 2: ANCOVA on the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour of students when compared with those who received conventional counselling

Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	5686.128	2	2843.064	57.444	0.000	
Intercept	2195.148	1	2195.148	44.353	0.000	
Study Behaviour	1192.425	1	192.425	3.888	0.053	
Treatment Models	5684.257	1	5684.257	114.850*	0.000*	
Error	3167.543	64	49.493			

Total	463471.000	67
Corrected Total	8853.672	66

Table 2 indicated that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 66 df denominator, the calculated F is 114.85 with Pvalue of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is not accepted. So, the effect of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour of secondary school students is significant.

This finding is consistent with prior researches that reported that cognitive restructuring technique is an effective treatment technique for modifying some other maladaptive behaviours among students. For examples, the finding supported the previous studies of Egbonike and Nwankwo (2021) found that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in reducing academic task procrastination among secondary school students.

In addition, the finding confirmed the work of Sheu (2022) who carried-out a study on the effect of cognitive restructuring and test wiseness training on test anxiety among newly admitted undergraduate students of Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State. These findings from previous empirical studies have found that cognitive restructuring is an intervention in reducing academic task procrastination, academic failure, positive attitudes towards lying among students and mathematics anxiety.

This suggests that cognitive restructuring is effective intervention for variety of issues. Cognitive restructuring focuses on changing the way an individual thinks about and approaches problems. It helps to identify and challenge irrational beliefs and replace them with more adaptive and realistic ones. Through this process, individuals are able to better understand the problem and develop more effective coping strategies. The effect of cognitive restructuring in reducing poor study behaviour among secondary school students in Awka-South Local Government Area is likely due to its ability to help individuals process and challenge their beliefs and modify their behaviour. Cognitive restructuring works to replace irrational and unhelpful thoughts with more adaptive ones, which can help reduce the level of poor study behaviour. This is in line with the cognitive-behavioural mode therapy model which suggests that thoughts, feelings and behaviours are all interconnected and can be modified through cognitive restructuring.

In this way, cognitive restructuring can help reduce the level of poor study behaviour among secondary school students in Awka-South Local Governement Area. Based on the available evidence, this also has been revealed in this study to be the same among secondary school students that cognitive restructuring technique is effective in reducing poor study behaviour among secondary school students in Awka-South Local Government Area. Cognitive restructuring technique exposes students to the profits of having rational and positive beliefs about their studies.

Summary of the Findings

From the analysis, the following findings were made:

1. Cognitive restructuring technique was found effective in reducing poor study behaviour than conventional counselling technique.

2. Cognitive restructuring technique was found more effective in reducing poor study behaviour than conventional counselling technique among secondary school students.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that cognitive restructuring technique was more effective than the conventional counselling technique in improving students' study behaviour. This indicates that it is a more appropriate intervention for addressing poor study behaviour among secondary school students.

Implication of the study

There was a significant difference in the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique and conventional counselling technique on poor study behaviour among secondary school students. This implies that conventional counselling alone may not adequately address poor study behaviour. Schools should therefore complement routine counselling with structured cognitive restructuring interventions where appropriate.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

1. School counsellors should adopt cognitive restructuring technique as a regular counselling intervention for students with poor study behaviour, as the study established that the technique is effective in improving students' study behaviour.
2. School principals and educational administrators should provide adequate support for the integration of cognitive restructuring programmes into the school guidance and counselling services, as the technique was found to be more effective than conventional counselling.
3. The Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) and the Anambra State Ministry of Education should organize regular workshops and in-service training for school counsellors on the application of cognitive restructuring techniques to enhance their professional competence in addressing poor study behaviour.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions for further studies are made:

1. Examine the efficacy of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour among different demographic groups.
2. Compare the effects of cognitive restructuring technique on poor study behaviour among secondary students in Awka-South Local Government Area.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique in combination with other treatments (counselling techniques) for poor study behaviour.

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