

**THE IMPACT OF COUNSELLING AS A MEANS OF DEALING WITH
MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOURS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.**

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Abstract

The research work examined the perceived impact of counselling as a means of dealing with maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted with a population 2,026 students in public secondary schools in Awka South LGA. The sample size comprised of 200 male and female students in senior secondary schools two (SS2) selected through simple random sampling technique. A 20 item questionnaire developed by the researcher titled; counselling as a means of dealing with maladaptive behaviour questionnaire (CDMBQ) with 4-point Likert rating scale was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts and the internal consistency of the instruments was determined using the Cronbach Alpha analysis which provided internal consistency coefficients of 0.77. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that there are forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students. Also, there are some counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students and there is a significant effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended that school counsellors should utilise self-reinforcement strategies, use of behaviour shaping strategies, and cognitive behaviour therapy among others.

Keywords: Maladaptive Behaviour, Counselling, Guidance and Counsellor

Introduction

The readiness or willingness of an individual to demonstrate decent and

good conduct, respect for authority, high sense of responsibility, love for orderliness, eagerness to discharge duties with promptitude and efficiency makes the individual acceptable (Kwaja & Mormah 2011). When an individual fails to reflect these characteristics, maladaptive behaviour occurs. Any behaviour tagged maladaptive runs contrary to the generally acceptable patterns of behaviour for the age and the environment of the individual and this behaviour negatively affects that individual and the people around him or her (Ughamadu & Enueme 2012).

In every society there are norms and values to which each member of a particular community is expected to adhere. Conformity to such norms and values brings about cohesion amongst the members of the particular community (Mweemba 2011). A school is said to be a community within a larger community. Schools in Nigeria are always trying to embark on orderliness through positive discipline (Tungata 2016). However, maladaptive behaviour is on the rise in most schools in Nigeria (Dlamini, 2013). This behaviour worries teachers, parents and the society at large. Teachers and school management now spend more time dealing with maladaptive behaviour issues instead of imparting knowledge to the young generation to ensure that they realise their full potentials. Furthermore, children who are showing this behaviour face a greater risk of becoming violent and chronic juvenile offenders if nothing is done to correct their behaviour (Kwaja & Mormah 2011).

Maladaptive is generally defined as any behaviour that does not conform to the established rules of a group of individuals or the society at large (Idris, 2016). At this stage, an adolescent finds it difficult to conform to the norms of the society. It could also be referred to as the engagement of people in criminal offences, illegal, antisocial and unethical behaviour. In a nutshell, any behaviour that violates the norm or social standard of the society is maladaptive. Maladaptive behaviour could also be any form of behaviour that contravenes the rules and regulations or even laws that govern an establishment.

According to Ali *et al.* (2014) assert that student maladaptive behaviour is a source of worry for all school stakeholders and it is a multifaceted and complex school problem that is manifested in various forms. The various common forms of student's maladaptive behaviour are late coming, drug and alcoholic abuse, bullying, vandalism school properties, smoking, writing or using foul language in class, class disruption and immoral acts (Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015; Jeeroburkhan, 2016). These maladaptive behaviours can be checked by the school counselor through the use of counselling.

Counselling is expedient in order to enable students learn to socialize with each other and avoid undesirable behaviours such as stealing, drug abuse, telling lies, rape, examination malpractice, abortion, fighting, bullying, cultism and other forms of disciplinary problems and maladaptive behaviours (Idu & Ojelupo, 2011). The herculean task of counselling rest on the shoulders of the guidance counsellor who is professionally trained to assist the students to riggle out of their present predicament using the appropriate counselling techniques. Idu & Ojelupo (2011) assert that "school counsellors assist students in various ways such as understanding themselves and helping them to develop self-awareness". Disciplinary problem also known as behaviour disorder which manifest as undesirable behaviour are the most common psychopathological problems among adolescent in schools.

Some researchers have identified the different types of maladaptive behaviour among in-school students; these bullying, vandalism, and sexual immorality (Esere, 2018). Goode (2017) further stated that behaviour that is maladaptive in one society may not be in another. Even within a society, what is maladaptive behaviour today may not be maladaptive behaviour tomorrow. Suleiman (2011) noted that a particular behaviour is antisocial if any of these three criteria are seen; when behaviour does not allow a person to function effectively with others as a member of the society; when such behaviour does

not permit the person to meet his or her own needs and when behaviour has a negative effect on the wellbeing of others.

Boyd (2015) reported that a lot of students are involved in the use of tobacco, amphetamines, barbiturates and heroin. In the same vein, Idris (2016) explained that there are many cases of cultism, sexual abuse, acts of vandalism, blackmail, threats and intimidations reported by classroom teachers as well as school principals. Idris affirmed that there is an increase in the rate of moral decadence among students as a result of lack of discipline. Maladaptive behaviour among students have culminated in juvenile delinquency. Many researchers have identified some causes of maladaptive behaviour among in-school students. Maladaptive behaviour in the classroom increases the stress level of teachers and at the same time changes the classroom dynamics. It is also a big challenge for learning and a risk factor for students' academic achievement. It is against this background that the researcher deemed to investigate on perceived impact of counselling as a means of dealing with maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the perceived impact of counselling as a means of dealing with maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools in Awka educational zone. Specifically, the study aimed to identify;

3. Forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students
4. Counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students
5. Effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

Research Questions

Three research questions were formulated to guide the study;

1. What are the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school

students in Awka South LGA?

2. What are the counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA?
3. What is the effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Literature Review

Kwaja and Mormah (2011) assessed managing adolescents' maladaptive behaviour in Nigerian Secondary Schools. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the maladaptive behaviour of secondary school students and ways of managing it. Four research questions were posed for the study. The researchers used descriptive survey design in the study. The study sample total 600 respondents including teacher and students of different genders. SPSS version 20 was used to perform descriptive analysis on the data collected. The result revealed that the use of counselling curriculum in schools, reinforcement, and counselling adolescents in moral values are the most effective strategies for managing maladaptive behaviour.

In a study carried out by Ali *et al* (2014) to examine the prominent constitute maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Lagos State. Four research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The researcher used descriptive survey design in the study. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) were used to derive a sample size of 201 from a population of 423 adolescent students in senior secondary school. Mean, standard deviation and t-test statistical tools were used in the analysis of data gathered for the study. The results revealed that what constitute maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students include; disobedience to teachers and schools rules and regulations, stealing other student's properties, staying in hostel during lesson among others.

Ugwu (2017) assessed the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour in secondary schools of Ebonyi State. Three research questions and one null

hypothesis guided the study. The research design was survey and sample size of 361 was derived from a population of 6000 secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The sample was randomly selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure from four selected units. The instrument used for data collection was researcher designed questionnaire. Statistical instruments used for data analysis were independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the study revealed that the causes of adolescents' maladaptive behaviour include; family background, socio-economic status of parents, the school, peer influence and influence of mass media. The results also showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students on the causes of maladaptive behaviour.

Muteki *et al.* (2013) carried out a study on teachers' perceptions of pupils' maladjustment problems from a psycho-social perspective. The study explored teachers' perceptions of maladjustment problems manifested by pupils in South Africa primary schools using the psycho-social lens to view and interpret the phenomena. The study involved 32 primary school educators participated in the study. The sample of educators was randomly selected from eight primary schools in the central Johannesburg district. The survey design adopted combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study found that teachers who were not adequately trained to deal with maladjusted pupils did not endeavour to implement any interventions to alleviate them. It also revealed that not all maladjusted pupils cause disciplinary problems for teachers as some of the pupils who are unsocial, withdrawn, unhappy, depressed, fearful and nervous do attract very little attention to themselves. In examining the causes of pupil maladjustments, the study found that these can be traced to some unfulfilled or thwarted psychosocial needs.

Methods

Descriptive survey research will be adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is one in which a group of people and items are studied by collecting and analyzing the data from only a few people considered to be representatives of the entire group. Descriptive survey design is considered appropriate for this study since the study will solicit information from respondents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State where computer studies is taught using a questionnaire.

The population of the study comprised all students in the public 19 (Government-Owned) Secondary Schools in Awka South L.G.A. According to Post Primary School Service (PPSSC, 2023) there was total of two thousand twenty six (2026) students in the nineteen (19) Public Secondary in Awka South Local Government Area as at the time of this study. The sample size was 200 students. In this regard, multi-staged sampling procedures were used. First, simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 200 students. Out of the 19 secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area, the researcher randomly sampled 10 schools using balloting with replacement. The next step was the selection of students. Firstly, 10 schools were selected out of the 19 secondary schools. Secondly, 20 students each were selected from the 10 selected secondary schools giving rise to a total number of 200 students that constitute the sample size of the study.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “counselling as a means of dealing with maladaptive behaviour questionnaire (CDMBQ)”. The questionnaire was made up of two sections; section “A” sought information on the bio-data of the respondents while section “B” was made up of twenty (20) items arranged under the 3 research questions. The instrument was based on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researcher subjected the instrument alongside with the purpose of the study and research questions to two experts in the Department of Educational Foundations in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka to determine the degree/extent at which the instrument can be used for the purpose it was designed for. The corrections, suggestions and amendments by the experts were used to modify the items in the questionnaires after which it was used for data collections. To obtain the reliability of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire will be tested by administering it to 30 students randomly selected from Awka North local government areas in Anambra state who are not part of research population. The data obtained from the administered questionnaire will be analyzed using Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability index were found to be 0.77 which according to Nworgu (2015) shows that the instrument is highly reliable.

The researchers adopted Direct Delivery Method (DDM) that is face to face method of administration of data collection. The direct delivery method will help the researcher to collect all the questionnaires without losing any one. Data collected will be analysed using the arithmetic mean obtained with the formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where: X = mean, \sum = Summation, f= frequency of the value, X = total number of respondents. The mean calculated will be computed for each item of the questionnaire with reference values of 4, 3, 2, and 1.

Thus: $\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$

Items with mean rating of 2.5 and above were regarded as agreed while items with mean rating below 2.5 will be regarded as disagreed. The decision rule was that any item that scored a mean of 2.5 and above would be seen as agreed responses, while items that scored less than 2.5 would be regarded as disagreed responses.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Table 1: The forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA

| S/N | ITEM STATEMENT | N | SA | A | D | SD | X | DECISION |
|-----|--|-----|-----|----|-----|----|------------|---------------|
| 1 | Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship with peers and teachers | 200 | 150 | 25 | 15 | 10 | 4 | Agreed |
| 2 | Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings of anxiety under normal conditions | 200 | 100 | 70 | 25 | 5 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 3 | A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. | 200 | 170 | 25 | 5 | - | 3.9 | Agreed |
| 4 | Tendency of developing pains | 200 | 110 | 60 | 20 | 10 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 5 | Taking delight in causing bodily injury to other students | 200 | 90 | 65 | 25 | 20 | 3.2 | Agreed |
| 6 | They are those who seriously and persistently misbehave | 200 | 41 | 28 | 120 | 11 | 2.5 | Agreed |
| | Grand mean | | | | | | 3.4 | Agreed |

Table 1 above shows that the respondents agreed that inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings of anxiety under normal conditions, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, tendency of developing pains, taking delight in causing bodily injury to other students and they are those who seriously and persistently misbehave with grand mean of 3.4 are the form of maladaptive behaviour.

Research question 2: What are the counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Table 2: The counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA

| S/N | ITEM STATEMENT | N | SA | A | D | SD | X | DECISION |
|-----|---|-----|-----|----|-----|----|------------|---------------|
| 7 | Use of self reinforcement strategies | 200 | 150 | 25 | 15 | 10 | 4 | Agreed |
| 8 | Use of behaviour shaping strategies | 200 | 100 | 70 | 25 | 5 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 9 | Cognitive behaviour therapy | 200 | 170 | 25 | 5 | - | 3.9 | Agreed |
| 10 | Use of emotional regulation strategies | 200 | 110 | 60 | 20 | 10 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 11 | One-on-one counselling sessions | 200 | 90 | 65 | 25 | 20 | 3.2 | Agreed |
| 12 | Sharing problems with the minded people | 200 | 41 | 28 | 120 | 11 | 2.5 | Agreed |
| | Grand mean | | | | | | 3.4 | Agreed |

Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that use of self-reinforcement strategies, use of behaviour shaping strategies, cognitive behaviour therapy, use of emotional regulation strategies, one-on-one counselling sessions and sharing problems with the minded people with grand mean of 3.4 are the counselling strategies dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA.

Research question 3: What is the effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA?

Table 3: The effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA

| S/N | ITEM STATEMENT | N | SA | A | D | SD | X | DECISION |
|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|------------|---------------|
| 13 | Counselling has giving confidence | 200 | 200 | 165 | 140 | 25 | 2.6 | Agreed |
| 14 | Logically giving them examples of those who ruined their lives from drug abuse | 200 | 100 | 70 | 25 | 5 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 15 | Helping them know the importance of discussing their problems rather than resorting to violence | 200 | 32 | 165 | 98 | 38 | 2.6 | Agreed |
| 16 | Making students realize the effects of rioting in the school | 200 | 110 | 60 | 20 | 10 | 3.4 | Agreed |
| 17 | Explaining to them the dangers of involving in cult activities and other vices | 200 | 90 | 65 | 25 | 20 | 3.2 | Agreed |
| 18 | Changing students' perception towards their involvement in unacceptable behaviours | 200 | 240 | 240 | 50 | 35 | 2.8 | Agreed |
| 19 | Attacking the negative thoughts and emotions of unacceptable behaviour | 200 | 170 | 25 | 5 | - | 3.9 | Agreed |
| | Grand mean | | | | | | 3.1 | Agreed |

Table 3 above shows that the respondents agreed that counselling has giving confidence, logically giving them examples of those who ruined their lives

from drug abuse, helping them know the importance of discussing their problems rather than resorting to violence, making students realize the effects of rioting in the school, explaining to them the dangers of involving in cult activities and other vices, changing students' perception towards their involvement in unacceptable behaviours and attacking the negative thoughts and emotions of unacceptable behaviour with grand mean of 3.1 are the effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students in Awka South LGA.

Discussion

The findings reveal that inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationship with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings of anxiety under normal conditions, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, tendency of developing pains, taking delight in causing bodily injury to other students and they are those who seriously and persistently misbehave are the form of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

The findings shows that items mentioned above are significant forms of maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students. This is in-line with the results of Bolu-Steve and Esere (2017) who deduced that the above listed factors were forms of maladaptive behaviours among in-school adolescents in Kwara State. It was also noted that this result is substantiated by the study conducted by Chikwature, Oyedele and Ganyani (2016) who asserted that the above are the forms of deviant behaviour on academic performance in Mutare urban primary school in Mutare district Zimbabwe.

The findings reveal that use of self-reinforcement strategies, use of behaviour shaping strategies, cognitive behaviour therapy, use of emotional regulation strategies, one-on-one counselling sessions and sharing problems with the minded people are the counselling strategies in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

The finding of the study shows that counselling strategies has a significant role in dealing with students with maladaptive behaviour. This result is in agreement with Gbadamosi (2003), who suggested that in handling maladaptive behaviour among in-school students, the school administrators and the counsellors must be involved in guiding students on what they are expected to do. Without prejudice to their different religious convictions, counsellors also have similar opinions on the strategies for managing maladaptive behaviour. Irrespective of the counsellors' religious affirmation, Asonibare (2016) confirmed that one of the most effective approaches used in managing both individual and classroom behaviour, which has gained tremendous support from parents, clinicians, psychologists and counsellors is behaviour modification techniques.

The findings revealed that counselling has giving confidence, logically giving them examples of those who ruined their lives from drug abuse, helping them know the importance of discussing their problems rather than resorting to violence, making students realize the effects of rioting in the school, explaining to them the dangers of involving in cult activities and other vices, changing students' perception towards their involvement in unacceptable behaviours and attacking the negative thoughts and emotions of unacceptable behaviour are the effectiveness of counselling in dealing with maladaptive behaviour among secondary school students.

The findings of the study shows that the effectiveness of counselling in dealing with students with maladaptive behaviour is consistent with the earlier reports of Hurlock (2006), who found out that counsellors utilized counselling has giving confidence, logically giving them examples of those who ruined their lives from drug abuse, helping them know the importance of discussing their problems rather than resorting to violence, making students realize the effects of rioting in the school, explaining to them the dangers of involving in cult activities and other vices, changing students' perception towards their involvement in

unacceptable behaviours and attacking the negative thoughts and emotions of unacceptable behaviour. It motivates the students to change from their undesirable habit to desirable ones. The result is in line with this finding is that of Hilgard (2006), who found disciplinary strategies, good and conducive examination halls and changing environment strategies can be adopted in curbing behavioural problems among students.

Conclusion

Secondary school students exhibit lots of unacceptable behaviours that call for counselling if the goals establishing our institutions of learning are to be attained. To this end, school counsellors are urged to utilize use of self-reinforcement strategies, use of behaviour shaping strategies, cognitive behaviour therapy, use of emotional regulation strategies, one-on-one counselling sessions and sharing problems with the minded people order to curb secondary school student maladaptive behaviours. This will go a long way in uplifting the tone of schools, improve the academic performance of students and reduce the social ills within society.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings of this study;

- 5 Counsellors should be accorded their place within the school setting to enable them discharge their duties as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- 6 Discipline students with maladaptive behaviours and discipline decisively. Often, punishments and sanctions for certain offences are in the school's books as cosmetics. In practice, principals sometimes do not have the final say in disciplining their students and since students know this, they tend to exploit it.
- 7 Parental responsibilities need another look. Parents need to revive their roles as parents; it is not enough to have children and leave the

responsibility of rearing, guiding and moulding them for the school alone.

- 8 The mass media especially the visual ones should be careful in what to feature and what not to, since most youth imitates and tend to exhibit a lot of what they borrow from these agents of information. As Nigeria is a developing nation, effort should be directed against polluting the characters of our youths since they are the hope of the nation.
- 9 Finally, the teachers should realize that the future of the country is in their hands whether or not the society appreciates it or not. With the co-operation of the government, the parents, teachers and the students, in the spirit of good understanding, love and charity, the government aim of providing disciplined, honest and patriotic citizens of the nation or country will be attained.

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