

Perception of Counsellors' Status on the Suitability of Rational Emotional Behavioural Therapy for Curbing Examination Malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the perception of counsellors' status on the suitability of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the extent to which teacher counsellors and guidance counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study raised one research question and one hypothesis and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was 126 Guidance counsellors and 319 teacher counsellors. Data were collected from the 445 secondary school counsellors currently serving in the 445 government owned secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. All the 445 copies of the instrument were distributed and retrieved. Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the entire instrument. Data collected were used to analyze the research question using mean, grand mean and standard deviation and t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis. The findings showed that counsellors using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy for as a suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria to a great extent. The finding of the hypothesis also showed that there is no significant difference in the mean perception scores of Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on the suitability of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Hence, recommendation was made based on the findings.

Keywords: Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy, Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors

INTRODUCTION

School, education has been noticed to be one of the basic steps needed to take an individual as a functional member of the society in which he/she belongs. In order to achieve academic excellence, the students are expected to attend school daily, but some students absent themselves from formal school activities without due permission thereby engaging themselves in examination malpractice. The school counsellors most often try their best to help them cut of the attitude of seeing examination malpractice as a short cut of achieving academic excellence. By implication, to handle these anomalies, the students may need a professional counsellor instead of a teacher counsellor.

A professional counsellor is an expert who operates directly on the client's specific problem [1]. In most cases, teacher counsellors are used in schools where there are no Guidance counsellors. Both Guidance counsellors and teacher Counsellors stand in to help clients in reaching 'their optimal level of psychosocial functioning through resolving negative patterns, prevention, rehabilitation, and improving quality of life' [2]. Guidance counsellors work in varied settings like schools, hospitals, corporate settings and so forth, and their roles also vary depending upon the setting in which they practice [3]. Part of a counsellor's training is becoming aware of their own needs so that they realize to what extent these needs can interfere with

the counselling process. The guidance counsellor should constantly be checking themselves by querying whose needs are being met...their own or those of the client. It is not unethical that the guidance counsellor's personal needs are met within their professional practice, but the meeting of these needs should be kept in perspective. Needs should not be met at the expense of clients. Clients must never be exploited. Secondary school students in examination class must be assisted so as not to become victims of examination malpractice, because, it goes a long way to destroying the student self esteem if a guidance counsellor is not sought for.

This issue of examination malpractice has been a problem facing the entire nation Nigeria since it was historically discovered in 1901 and 1914. The federal government in 1984 came up with the decree 20, commonly known as the miscellaneous offences decree or examination malpractice decrees of (1999) now act of parliament (1999). This decree was established on the 10th day of May 1999 and is known as decree 33. The offences and penalties are stated and they include among others. A person who in anticipation of before or at any examination; (a) by any fraudulent trick or device or in abuse of his office or with intent to unjustly enrich himself or any other person) procures any question paper produced or intended for use at any examination of persons) whether or not the question paper concerned is proved to be false) nor genuine or not related to the examination in question. (b). A person guilty of an offence under sub-section of this section is liable on conviction to a fine or imprisonment stipulated according to age and or the involvement of either principal, teacher, an invigilator, a supervisor, an examiner or an agent or employee of the examination body etc (Examination Malpractice Decree 33, 1999:1-2).

Not relenting in her efforts to curb examination malpractice the government introduced another package known as Anti-corruption law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria known as Anti -

corruption law (2000). Here offences and penalties are grouped to bring about the desired goals of the decree. The Anti-corruption law (2000) part 3 paragraphs 8-10 including other related ones have some similarities in that they are against asking for, taking and receiving any property or benefit of any kind for oneself or any other person on account of getting involved in examination malpractice. The reaction of the federal government did not stop here, it continued with some other discoveries including that of [4].

[5] stated that each year the five major public examination bodies in the country cancel an average of 740,000 results, blacklist about 450 principals and others, derecognize about 360 schools and handover about 9000 students to the police. These public examination bodies are, National Examination Council (NECO), West African Examination Council (WAEC), Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Teachers Institute (NTI) and National Board of Technical Education (NABTED) respectively. He further identified the fact that about 17 billion is wasted each year in purchasing registration forms to retake these examinations. This is likely to affect the individuals concerned adversely and in most cases they begin to seek help from guidance counsellors.

When a troubled client seeks help from a counsellor according to [6] the counsellor (teacher counsellor or a professional counsellor) are expected to use a counselling strategy depending on the nature of the problem presented and how the guidance counsellor perceives it. It is therefore necessary at this juncture to find out what guidance counsellors perception means. Counsellors perception according to [7] is the process by which a guidance counsellor becomes aware of objects, objectives and facts in his environment on the basis of stimuli from the objects which affects the senses. For him, it is the process by which counsellors receive, interpret and respond to the stimulus or a combination of the sense mechanism. This is not an aimless exercise and the counsellor concerned

does not perceive objects in a Jumble manner. It is developed gradually but with modification of the counsellor's responses on the basis of his experiences and his expectations become more expanded and refined. It all depends on what the counsellor have heard about a concept or his client. As a matter of fact, it is affected by counsellors subjective judgment and opinions. Since this is the position of a counsellor in his environment, it is expected that every trained counsellor should be able to choose an appropriate counselling strategy for a particular behaviour problem.

In Enugu State, the issue of examination malpractice is on the increase. No year will pass without a record of students involving in examination malpractice. The researcher is of the opinion that this unacceptable behaviour by students may be reversed to a great extent if proper counselling by trained guidance counsellors is utilized unlike those attended by a teacher counsellor or a para-counsellor. This they can do by affording students and others who can influence them the opportunity to acquaint themselves with a counselling strategy as postulated by the behaviourists such as in Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) strategy which may be used to unlearn the already learned unacceptable behaviours.

Rational Emotive Therapy for Froggart [8] is employed as a counselling strategy to assist in effecting a change from illogical thinking to logical thinking such as, "I may not be able to pass English Language; it is very difficult," to logical thinking such as, "If I improve my study habit, there is no subject that will be too difficult for me to pass". In the context of giving students information on the evil of examination malpractice, [9] noted that progressive students and those with high self-esteem are taught to stay out of this terrible mess. A defaulter faces a blank future and most times such activities impair future prospects. This will at the end help in changing students perception towards cheating in an examination. Following [10] Rational Emotive

Behavioural Therapy (REBT) is a form of re-education in which individuals are taught to replace irrational ideas with rational ones. By establishing a good rapport through empathy, counsellors ought to engage in actively teaching students to be of a good behaviour during examination. This kind of reassurance will help the client relax before examination. [11] remarked that fear of failure in examination induces students to cheat in Examination. This is likely why [12] remarked that negative talks on the part of students must be attacked and discouraged during counselling. [2] also emphasized doing rather than certification. In the same light, [5], noted that using paradoxical intention to assist students internalize the evil of examination malpractice is significant because paradoxical intention can be used to alter a dysfunctional tendency in a child.

In Enugu State, the issue of examination malpractice is on the increase. Examination malpractice is recorded every year in schools unfortunately. From observation, in Enugu State according to Post Primary School Management Board, (2009), counsellors are posted to schools irrespective of sex. The sex difference here gives Counsellors of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy the necessity to employ a strategy that would curb students undesirable behaviour since they engage in examination malpractice. The counsellors by implication are also affected because they are afraid of being black mailed as a womanizer or as a prostitute since culture does not permit certain exposure in most rural areas in Enugu State. It is on this premise that the researcher examined the perception of counsellors' status on the suitability of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) strategy which may be used to unlearn examination malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The rate at which students engage in examination malpractice in our nation Nigeria is alarming. Every effort by the government to fight this menacing

situation is being discouraged by perpetrators of examination malpractice by the day. At examination centers, different styles of examination malpractice are recorded. Some candidates who sit for examination are not always formally registered. Most often than not, unauthorized materials are found present alongside candidate scripts. Some other times, results are altered and used by persons other than the candidates.

In spite of the resistant nature of perpetrators of examination malpractice against various strategies and procedures adapted to curb examination malpractice in the past, there has been a greater percentage of determination on the part of stakeholders in education industry to

fight back. Institutions embark on seizing answer sheets from culprits. Some are suspended indefinitely from retaking. Some schools are shut down while some principals are suspended if found guilty. Some adopt very serious invigilation strategies including searching the students before assigning them to seats. This study is looking at systematic REBT strategy and how both teacher counsellors and guidance counsellors perceive them as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State. It is against this background that the researcher examined the perception of counsellors' status on the suitability of REBT for curbing examination malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted descriptive survey research design for this study because it permits the collection of original data and describes the condition as they exist in their natural setting. The population for the study comprised 126 practicing guidance counsellors and 392 teacher counsellors from all the 319 government owned secondary schools in Enugu State. (Source: Guidance and Counselling Unit, Education Services Department, Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB), Enugu. 2016/2017 Session, November, 2016). The total numbers of school counsellors therefore are 445 serving in 445 secondary schools (Educational Services Department, Guidance and Counselling Division P.P.SM.B Enugu, 2017). The sampling was not necessary because the population of the study is small and manageable.

The instrument for data collection is a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher called Counsellors Perception Scale (CPS). It has one cluster with 5 items developed to assist the researcher provide clues that helped raise much needed data that were used to answer the one research question. 1 research hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic. The response format of the instrument is a 4 point scale of very great extent, great extent, little extent and very

little extent. Each response option has a numerical value assigned to it as follows: Very great extent (VGE)-4 points; Great extent (GE)-3 points; Little Extent (LE)-2 points and Very little extent (VLE)-1 point. An introductory letter was attached to the instrument stating the purpose of the study for the respondents' easy reference.

The instrument was validated by three experts (one in measurement and evaluation and 2 others in Guidance Counselling Departments) with the estimated overall reliability coefficient of 0.97 for the cluster using Cronbach Alpha Reliability tool. Finally the researcher and the research assistants were able to retrieve 445 signifying 100% return of dully filled copies of the administered instrument. One research question formulated that guided the study was answered using mean, grand mean and standard deviation; t-test statistic was used to analyze the one research hypothesis. The mean rating of the numerical values assigned to the response options will be added and divided by the number of the response options. This formed the basis for the cut-off point. Thus:

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

From this, the researcher made the required inferences based on the data that

were analyzed for the study. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as great extent while any item whose mean score is below 2.50 was interpreted to mean 'little extent'. For the hypothesis, the decision rule is that if t-calculated is equal to or greater than the t-critical value at the chosen confidence level (.05) and degree of freedom (n_1+n_2-2) the null hypothesis of no significant difference will be rejected. If on the other hand, the calculated t-value is less than that of the t-critical from the table value, the null hypothesis will not be rejected.

Data Analysis and Results

This chapter presents the results of the study in accordance with the research questions and hypothesis that guided the study. The analyzed data were presented in Table 1-2.

Research Question 1:

To what extent do guidance counsellors and teacher counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) Rating with Standard Deviation of the extent to which Teacher Counsellors and Guidance Counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as suitable for curbing Examination Malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	Guidance Counsellors N=126		Teacher Counsellors N=319		Overall		Decision
		X_1	SD_1	X_2	SD_2	X_3	SD_3	
1.	Giving information to students on the evils of examination malpractice	3.39	0.55	3.42	0.72	3.41	0.64	GE
2.	Changing students perception towards cheating in examination	3.19	0.91	2.55	1.10	2.87	1.01	GE
3.	Actively teaching students to be of good Behaviour	3.45	0.71	3.35	0.71	3.40	0.71	GE
4.	Attacking the negative emotions of students relating to examination	3.50	0.66	3.56	0.58	3.53	0.62	GE
5.	Emphasizing doing rather than certification	3.59	0.64	3.32	0.71	3.46	0.68	GE
6.	Using paradoxical intention to assist students Internalizing the evil of examination malpractice	3.19	0.80	2.47	0.56	2.83	0.68	GE
Grand Mean		3.39	0.71	3.11	0.73	3.25	0.72	GE

Table 1 indicated that of the 6 items on the extent to which guidance counsellors' and teachers counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria, the respondents agreed with all the items (1, 2, 3 4, 5 and 6) with recorded mean

scores of (3.41, 2.87, 3.40, 3.53, 3.46 and 2.83) indicated to a great extent. The standard deviation for all the items raised is 0.72 which is small signifying that the responses are closely clustered around the mean. The Table also shows that the respondents' grand mean score for the overall items raised is (3.25). Following the guideline for the interpretation of the

respondents' data, the answers to research question one showed that guidance and teacher counsellors perceived Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria to a great extent.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean perception scores of Guidance Counsellors' and Teacher Counsellors on the suitability of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean (X̄) Rating with Standard Deviation of the Extent to which Guidance Counsellors' and Teacher Counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a Strategy Suitability for curbing Examination Malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Counsellors Status	N	X̄	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Guidance Counsellors'	126	3.39	0.60	445	0.06	±1.96	NS Reject Ho ₁
Teachers Counsellors	319	3.11	0.75				

Significant at P < .05, df = 443, critical t-value = ±1.96

The t-test analysis of the Data in Table 2 revealed that the t-calculated value (0.06) is less than the critical t-value of ±1.96 at degree of freedom (df) 443 and at 0.5 level of confidence. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected as there is no significant

difference in the mean perception scores of Guidance Counsellors' and Teacher Counsellors on the suitability of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

For the discussion of the findings inherent in this study, research question and hypotheses that are related were treated together. The first research question sought to find out the extent to which guidance counsellors and teacher counsellors perceived Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) strategy as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result in Table 1 showed that guidance counsellors and teacher's counsellors perceived REBT strategy as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria to a great extent. The first hypothesis ascertained if there is no significant difference in the

mean perception scores of guidance Counsellors' and teacher Counsellors on the suitability of REBT as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The analysis of the t-test comparison according to Table 2 showed that there is no significant difference in the mean perception scores of guidance Counsellors' and teacher Counsellors on the suitability of REBT as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The finding is at variance with that of [4] who found that counsellors are more concerned about curbing examination malpractice in their places of primary assignments.

CONCLUSION

The analysis and interpretations done and the information from related literature indicated that guidance counselors and teacher counsellors perceived Rational

Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria to a great extent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve this mission this, a recommendation is made based on the findings of this study.

school guidance and teachers counsellors to enable them utilize REBT as counselling strategy suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State.

1. This study strongly advocates that seminars should be organized for

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