

Perception of Counsellors' Status on the Suitability of Systematic Desensitization Strategy 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 systematic desensitization 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 Systematic Desensitization strategy 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 perceived systematic desensitization as 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 systematic desensitization as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Hence, recommendation was made based on the findings.

Keywords: Systematic Desensitization, examination malpractice and counsellors perception.

INTRODUCTION

A guidance counsellor is a person who engages himself/herself in personal, educational, and vocational counselling with clients throughout the lifespan, in the particular circumstances of the clients' lives. The inescapable fact of the matter is that a guidance counsellor is a person, however much he may strive to make himself an instrument of his patient's treatment they share their feelings, thoughts, learning, triumphs and hardships on the journey of being a guidance counsellor, from when they entered the profession till the present [1]. Many questions come to mind when we refer to professional counsellors' as healer(s), expert(s) and problem-solver(s). Who are they? Who made them healers, experts and problem-solvers? Perhaps, factors such as educational background,

workplace and length of work experience all played a strong role in shaping each counselor's growth in the profession. Meanwhile, a guidance counsellor performs the work of counselling. A professional counsellor is an expert who operates directly on the client's specific problem [2]. 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' [3]. Guidance counsellors work in varied settings like schools, hospitals, corporate settings and so forth, and their roles also vary based upon the setting in

which they practice [4]. Part of a guidance 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 a victim of examination malpractice, because, it goes a long way to destroy the students' 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 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 [5]. [6] stated that each year the five major public examination bodies in the country cancel an average of 740,000 results, blacklist about 450 principles 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 guidance counsellor according to [7] 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 counsellor perceives it. It is therefore necessary at this juncture to find out what counsellors perception means. Guidance Counsellors perception according to [8] 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 guidance 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 guidance 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 guidance 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. Every year record students' involvement 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 systematic desensitization. Systematic desensitization strategy may be used to unlearn the already learned unacceptable behaviours. For instance, systematic desensitization according to [9] is defined as a systematic desensitization as a technique used to treat phobias and other extreme or erroneous fears based on principles of behaviour modification. [10] puts it in another form but with the same meaning thus, with systematic desensitization an individual learns to relax while imagining scenes that are progressively more anxiety provoking. [11] remarked that there's the driving force of fear, this case, of failure in examination that sends students self esteem into cheating. Systematic

desensitization is used in counselling to help the client cope with fears and to induce relaxation. It is not a do or die affair. Bourne asserts that in progressive relaxation, various muscles are first tightened and then relaxes, repeated practice enables a person to create relaxed sensation intentionally in a variety situations. In examination situation the therapist helps the client to relax during examination. [12] asserts that evolving effective teaching and learning environment is very necessary for proper relaxation to take place because the relaxed atmosphere brings out the best out of an individual as against a tensed and frightening one, hence, relaxation replaces a person's weakness with confidence and alertness. It also involves breathing in and out exercise, relaxing muscles before examination. It is on this premise that the researcher examined perception of counsellors' status on the suitability of systematic desensitization for curbing 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.

Researchers by [13] have ascertained that lack of trained counsellors in schools has been a very silent factor militating against curbing examination malpractice. Similarly, counselling division of Post Primary School Management Board, Enugu State, states that teacher counsellors in schools are not formerly trained. They lack experience in counselling and require to be exposed to training of some sorts they reiterated. These teacher counsellors

who are expected to improve themselves through workshops and seminars organized by counselling association of Nigeria and the guidance division of the Post Primary School Management Board is denied the opportunity. Government is not coming out to finance the programme and this has been the issue since a decade ago.

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

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). Sampling is not necessary because the population of the study is small.

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

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 desensitization 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 systematic desensitization for curbing examination malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

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.

Table 1: Mean (\bar{x}) Rating with Standard Deviation of the Extent to which Counsellors' perceive Systematic Desensitization 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
		\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_3	SD_3	
1.	Relaxing students before and during examination	3.33	0.60	2.83	0.66	3.08	1.22	GE
2.	Letting students know that examination is not a do or die affair	3.79	0.61	3.79	1.02	3.79	0.82	GE
3.	Logically presenting serious examination issues with some form of relaxation	3.65	0.58	4.00	1.07	3.83	0.83	GE
4.	Assisting students to exercise their muscles Before the examination	1.48	0.62	2.02	0.16	1.75	0.39	LE
5.	Breathing in and out exercise	1.45	0.53	2.01	1.02	1.73	0.78	LE
6.	Listening to soft tunes/music	2.77	0.68	2.41	0.56	2.59	0.62	GE
Grand Mean		2.75	0.60	2.84	0.75	2.80	0.78	GE

Data in Table 1 indicates that of the 6 items on the extent to which counsellors' perceive Systematic Desensitization as suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria, the respondents agreed that 3 of the items (1, 2, 3 and 6) with recorded mean scores of (3.08, 3.79, 3.83 and 2.59) indicated to a great extent whereas the remaining 2 of the items (4 and 5) indicated to a little extent with mean scores of (1.75 and 1.73). The standard deviation for all the

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 counsellors perceives Systematic Desensitization as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria?

items raised is 0.78 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 (2.80). Following the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents' data, the answers to research question one showed that counsellors perceived systematic desensitization 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 Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on

the suitability of systematic desensitization as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Mean (\bar{x}) Rating with Standard Deviation of the Perception Scores of Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on the Suitability of Systematic Desensitization as Strategy for curbing Examination Malpractice in Secondary Schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Counsellors Status	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Guidance Counsellors'	126	3.32	0.60	445	0.01	± 1.96	Reject H_{01}
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 (0.01) 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

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 ascertain the extent to which teacher counsellors and guidance counsellors perceive Systematic Desensitization strategy as suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The result in Table 1 showed that counsellors perceived systematic desensitization as suitable strategy 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 Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on the suitability of systematic desensitization as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The analysis of the t-

rejected as there is no significant difference in the mean perception scores of Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on the suitability of systematic desensitization as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria.

test comparison according to Table 2 showed that there is no significant difference in the mean perception scores of Teacher Counsellors' and Guidance Counsellors on the suitability of systematic desensitization as strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The finding is in consonance with that of [14] who remarked that systematic desensitization is used in counselling to help the client cope with fears and to induce relaxation. The finding is also in agreement with [15] who asserts that evolving effective teaching and learning environment is very necessary for proper relaxation to take place because the relaxed atmosphere brings out the best out of an individual as against a tensed and frightening one, hence, relaxation replaces a person's weakness with confidence and alertness. It also involves breathing in and out exercise, relaxing muscles before examination.

CONCLUSION

The analysis and interpretations done and the information from related literature indicated that counsellors perceived systematic desensitization as suitable strategy for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria to a great extent.

Educational Implication of the Finding
The finding of the study has far-reaching implications for the Nigerian educational system in general and for the growth and

development of guidance and counselling in Enugu State, Nigeria. School counsellors perception of systematic desensitization as suitable for curbing examination malpractice may affect the way and manner they handle some of their clients. Clients that cope easily through systematic desensitization are encouraged more and more because it maximized their learning ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

school counsellors to enable them perceive systematic desensitization as counselling strategy suitable for curbing examination malpractice in secondary schools in Enugu State

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