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COUNSELLORS ROLE FOR IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS USING RATIONAL EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (REBT) IN ENUGU EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study is aimed at ascertaining counsellors role for improving the academic achievements of secondary school students using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The survey research design was employed. The population for the study consisted of all the 59 school counsellors serving in the 31 government owned secondary schools. The number of school counsellors is small and manageable so no sampling was done. The Counsellors Role and Students Academic Achievement Scale (CRS-AAS) developed by the researchers with 11 items and a 4-point response format was used to collect data for the study. It was validated by three experts –one in Measurement and Evaluation and two in Guidance and Counselling. Their inputs were taken into consideration while developing the final draft. Its internal consistency was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate and it yielded a coefficient of .65. Mean, Standard deviation and grand mean was used to answer the research question while the t-test statistics was used to test the research hypothesis. The study found that Counsellors roles in improving the academic achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria are as follows: mending the gap between the theory and practice of REBT to enhance students' academic achievements, efficacy to match personality trait enhances students academic achievements, addressing unhealthy negative emotions to be a viable intervention for helping students achieve their potential in the classroom and in life while living happier in the process, prepares students using their educational resources (disputation and verbalization) to enhance academic excellence and students actualization of their individual goals, helping students to create vocational opportunities options and awareness, helping students to foster career management strategies by helping them develop the skills to effectively manage their careers, helping students to develop high self-esteem, positive self-concept, and good personality and assisting in the need to balance the multiple roles assumed by individuals throughout their career development. The implications of the findings were highlighted, conclusion drawn and recommendations were proffered.

Keywords: Counsellors Role, REPT, students, academic standard.

INTRODUCTION

Since the history of mankind, individuals have continually applied different methods/ways to explain and solve problems associated with human behaviours and academic achievements. These include religion, people's traditional belief system and specific cultural tenets. All these are different forms of therapies which may not be scientifically validated. This could be likely why the current view of professional school counselling, as reflected in the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) National Model [1], reiterated that school counsellors should shift from more traditional, reactive roles within schools in order to become more comprehensive and proactive in their delivery of counselling services to students.

Today, there are more modern and scientifically oriented methods of explaining and solving problems associated with human behaviours. One of these methods or approaches is the Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) [2]. Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy, is a form of psychotherapeutic treatment developed by a psychologist - Albert Ellis- in 1955 [3]. It was designed to help people overcome mental health problems caused by distorted, dysfunctional thought patterns that interfere with normal functioning. REBT addresses mental health problems with specific techniques that target dysfunctional thought and behavioral problems. The role of the REBT therapist is to help clients make positive changes that help them lead more productive and fulfilling lives [4].

Subsequently, in the process of treating a patient using REBT, different strategies which target the cognitive, emotive, and behavioral aspects of the persons psychological problems are used [5]. This study is more interested with the cognitive strategy. The cognitive strategy involves the use of several techniques, these being:

- Disputing irrational beliefs,
- Doing cognitive homework,
- Changing one's language and
- Psycho educational methods [5].

Amongst the three strategies utilized in REBT, one of the factors that make it distinct from other forms of psychotherapy is the steps it implements in its cognitive strategy [6].The different techniques used in its cognitive strategy are interrelated as they aim to reinforce one another. What follows is a specification of the steps involved in the cognitive strategy in REBT.

The procedure of the strategy begins with the ABCDEF framework of emotional and behavioral problems [7] and [5]. Within the framework, A represents the activating event, B represents the persons beliefs, and C represents the cognitive, emotive, and behaviorual consequences related to A and B, D represents disputes of beliefs, E represents the new effect or consequences, F represents verbalization [7] and [5]. In most instances, the relationship between A and C is established before assessing B. In the assessment of B, several basic steps are followed thus:

The person is made to detect his irrational beliefs, the person is made to determine the distinction between his rational and irrational beliefs, and the person is made to determine the effects of recognizing the distinction between his rational and irrational beliefs [7] and [5].

After implementing the ABCDEF framework, the psychologically disturbed individual is given tasks that aim at strengthening his newly acquired cognitive beliefs in specific contexts that require him to address the activating events that previously triggered a negative emotional and behavioral response on the person [7] and [5]. It is important to note that REBT allows deviations in the procedures used within it as long as these procedures follow the ABCDEF framework specified above [5]; [7]. Now what becomes of the counsellor role towards students academic achievements? At this point the counsellor helps the client/student to question his irrationality and change his basic philosophy so as to actualize his aspirations for academic excellence.

Counselling is the main domain of the school counsellor and anything that has to do with this service must be performed by the counsellor. The counsellor is expected to devote a great deal of his/her time to counselling. Just in the same way that a teacher in a school is employed to guide and stimulate students' learning for academic excellence, so also is a school counsellor employed to use his/her skills to assist students, to resolve their everyday problems or conflicts which have been, or that maybe, obstructing their search for academic achievement. In individual counselling, the school counsellor seeks to assist students in a one-to-one basis to resolve the irrational beliefs and concerns of an educational vocational, social, emotional or moral nature under optimal conditions of confidentiality and mutual trust [8]. In essence, helping students to become more fully aware of themselves and the ways in which they respond to the influences of the environment is basically the sole responsibility of the counsellor. It is known that students enter into schools with various problems emanating from their homes, within the community or at school and counsellors should be able, to use his wealth of skills and resources to help them gain insight into these concerns. This does not happen by chance. It could happen in situation where the male/female students could not counter their irrational belief to excel academically.

The point presented above indicates that there could be gender influence on students' academic achievement in the counselling processes. For this reason, there is need for the present study to further examine the influence of gender on students' achievement. Counsellors roles in improving the academic achievements of secondary school students using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) appears to provide a supportive framework for potentially student achievement.

This is actualized by the help of school counselors who plays a vital role in the dissemination of REBT through professional development. While counsellors efficacy appears to be directly linked to student achievement, findings from several experimental studies suggest that Rational Emotive Education (REE), a derivative of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) developed by [2], is effective in increasing student achievement [9] and [10]. Yet, because there is no empirical evidence of the utility of REE or REBT towards counsellor's efficacy, it is impossible to determine their overall impact on student achievement. Notwithstanding, research in this area appears to have vitality and may identify additional strategies and interventions that have the potential to significantly impact on secondary school academic achievements and the society at large.

At the school-level, teachers, students, support staff members, including school counsellors and school psychologists, have implemented REE curriculum for students in elementary grades with success [11]; [12]. It is conceivable then, that school counselors could mend the gap between the theory and practice of REBT for teachers as well. As a result, students may be indirectly impacted by this teacher intervention. Knowledge and understanding of REBTs influence on teacher efficacy and student achievement appears essential as school counsellors strive to impact all students through comprehensive strengths-based counselling programmes [4].

An exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of students academic excellence and REBT specifically, may offer insight into the viability and potential impact REBT may have on student performance. A theoretical integration of this nature may support or reject the direction of current research and practice for counselor educators, educational researchers, and school counselors, while encouraging additional avenues for study.

[13], contended that REBT counsellor's with high efficacy are more likely to increase student academic achievement. [12], purports that academic achievement increases and students are more successful when school counsellors have high efficacy beliefs through ABCDEF model.

Low self efficacy has the potential to impede the ability of REBT counsellor to function optimally during counselling for the enhancement of students academic excellence in the classroom and educational settings. [6] suggested that a REBT counsellor's belief that he or she is unable to manage students behaviours is likely to lead to avoiding classroom management techniques. The REBT counsellor will often "give in" to unruly students because the task of managing the class is seen as exceeding their competence, thus perpetuating further lack of efficacy in classroom management. It is conceivable that this cycle is applicable to various other aspects of teaching, including working with low functioning students, communicating with teachers and parents, and lesson plan development and delivery.

The impact of REBT counsellors on student achievement appears obvious and well supported. [7], found that personality traits, self-perceptions, and drive influence REBT counsellors efficacy. Educational researchers, however, have devoted little effort and resources to exploring these factors and their true impact on teachers efficacy.

The above indicates that there is potential impact of REBT towards secondary school students academic achievement. Since students are human, and humans are genetically predisposed to think irrationally, they will often rate themselves as a whole, conditional of their success [13]. Thus, a student who has a high sense of efficacy in a certain task such as academic is likely to excel academically when involved in the task, while the same student maintaining low self-esteem as a result of irrational thought will likely have poor academic performance. Findings by [14], suggested this relationship is present between student efficacy and self-esteem. Self-esteem decreases when people base their self-worth on an irrational thought/self-defeating words [15]. REBT supported these findings, while suggesting that students accept themselves unconditionally, as humans who sometime fail and succeed at academic related tasks. This failure does not translate to who they are as a student or person.

The philosophical framework of REBT also supports unconditional other acceptance (UOA) and unconditional life acceptance (ULA), [16]. These humanistic tenets of REBT appear useful in helping students form preferential, acceptable philosophies of themselves, and life. A study conducted by [8], demonstrated the irrational beliefs that many students maintain. While the authors suggest that students' participating in their study maintained personality traits exemplary of effective students, the inverse is presumed under the theoretical framework of REBT. An overwhelming majority of the participants held strong, rigid beliefs regarding communication, respect, sensitivity

towards students, and students inquisitiveness. REBT postulates that these strong, rigid beliefs held by students lead to unhealthy negative cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences [3]. These unhealthy negative consequences have the potential to directly interfere with students' ability to effectively excel academically. Student achievement will decrease if counsellors/teachers are well-trained in classroom instruction, yet have emotional disturbances that impede their delivery. Recent findings by [11], suggested the intrapersonal and adaptability dimensions of emotional intelligence that are linked to students self-efficacy. Students who have difficulty understanding how they feel and adapting to problem situations appear to have lower self-efficacy. Additionally, students with lower self-efficacy as a result of irrational thought may have difficulty identifying how they feel and adapting to problem situations. This concept has the capacity to become self-fulfilling and cyclical in nature. Without appropriate intervention students may continue to reindoctrinate themselves with unhelpful thoughts leading to unproductive teaching and low student academic achievement.

REBT, however, appears to address these dimensions of emotional intelligence and associated concerns. Scientific and logical processes for exploring and controlling emotions are provided with this framework while promoting a flexible orientation to adverse events [2]. Still, professional development which aimed at increasing students efficacy continues to focus on concrete intervention including peer mentoring [6], internet navigation [12], and curriculum instruction [8], students continue to struggle with self-actualization, unmanaged thoughts, unhealthy negative emotions and acceptance. These internal conflicts negatively impact student academic achievement. Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy appears to be a viable intervention for helping students achieve their potential in the classroom and in life while living happier in the process. Through professional development focused on the philosophy of REBT if school counsellors discharge their roles effectively teachers may be able to further equip students to reach their potential socially, emotionally, and academically. This is the crux of this study which is aimed at investigating counsellors roles in improving the academic achievements of secondary school student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research question guided the study.

1. What are the counsellors role for improving the academic achievements of secondary school students using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

This null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study and was tested at .05 level of confidence

1. There is no significant difference in the Mean Scores of Male and female school counsellors role for improving the academic achievements of secondary school students using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Methods

The study adopted the survey research design and was conducted in all the 31 government owned secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for the study was consisted of the 59 school counsellors currently serving in these 31 secondary schools. The number is small and manageable so no sampling was done. The instrument for data collection was a self structured instrument developed by the researchers called Counsellors Role and Students Academic Achievement Scale (CRS-AAS). The instrument has 11 items. It was validated by three experts – one in measurement and evaluation and two in guidance and counselling. Their constructive criticisms were used to develop the final draft of the instrument. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained using the data collected from 12 school counsellors from Udi Education Zone, Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria after a pilot study was conducted on them; using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. It yielded a coefficient of .65. The researchers administered copies of the instrument on the 59 school counsellors in the study area but were only able to retrieve 49 copies signifying 83.05% return dully filled copies of the instrument. Man, grand mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis.

For the research question, the decision rule is that any item whose mean score is equal to or greater than 2.50 is regarded as agree, while any that is less than 2.50 is interpreted as disagree. For the research hypothesis, the decision rule for making inferences is that if the Calculated t-value is greater than the table t-value as a chosen confidence level (.05) and a degree of freedom $n_1 + n_2 - 2$) the null hypotheses of no significant difference is rejected, if on the other hand that the calculated t-value is less than the value of the t-critical from the table, then the null hypotheses is not rejected.

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1: What are the Counsellors roles for improving the academic achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Counsellors on their Roles for Improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

S/ N	Counselors roles in improving Secondary School Students Academic Achievement	Responses				Mean \bar{X}	SD	Decision
		4 SA	3 A	2 D	1 SD			
1	School counselors mend the gap between the theory and practice of REBT to enhance students' academic Achievements	19	13	9	8	2.88	1.11	Agree
2	REBT counsellor's efficacy to match personality trait enhances students Academic Achievements	31	9	6	3	3.39	0.93	Agree
3	REBT counsellor's addresses unhealthy negative emotions to be a viable intervention for helping students achieve their potential in the classroom and in life while living happier in the process	21	12	9	7	2.96	1.09	Agree
4	REBT counsellor's role decreases student desire goal and that will positively enhance student's academic performance	7	10	13	19	2.10	1.08	Disagree
5	REBT counsellor with a developmental purpose, prepares students using their educational resources (Disputation and verbalization) to enhance Academic	19	15	11	4	3.00	0.98	Agree
6	Help students Creates Vocational opportunities options and awareness	17	14	11	7	2.84	1.07	Agree
7	Counsellors role does not improve study Habit	9	11	12	17	2.24	1.13	Agree
8	Helps students foster career management strategies by helping individuals develop the skills to effectively manage their careers	29	8	7	5	3.24	1.05	Agree
9	Does not help students to develop academic, personal and social competence	3	9	10	27	1.76	0.96	Disagree
10	They help students to develop high self-esteem, positive self-concept, and good personalit	18	17	7	7	2.94	1.05	Agree
11	Assist in the need to balance the multiple roles assumed by individuals throughout her career development	25	13	7	4	3.20	0.98	Agree
N = 49		Grand Mean			2.78		Agree	

Table 1 shows that of the 11 items on Counsellors roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria, the respondents agreed with 9 items (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11) as they recorded mean scores of (2.88, 3.39, 2.96, 3.00, 2.84, 3.24, 2.94 and 3.20) which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. They however disagreed with 3 of the items (4, 7 and 9) with mean scores of (2.10, 2.24 and 1.76) respectively. The standard deviation for all the items are small signifying that there is homogeneity in the responses of the respondents. The table also shows that the respondents grand mean score for the items raised is (2.78).

From the foregoing, the answer to research question one is that Counsellors role in improving the academic achievements of secondary school student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria are as follows: mending the gap between the theory and practice of REBT, efficacy to match personality trait, addresses unhealthy negative emotions in the classroom, prepares students using their educational resources (disputation and verbalization), creates vocational opportunities options and awareness, development of high self-esteem, positive self-concept, and good personality are counselors' roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female school counsellors roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone.

Table 2: t-test Result of Male and Female School Counsellors roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone.

Gender	N	\bar{X}	S^2	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Female Counsellors	29	2.78					
Male Counsellors	20	2.51	0.39	47	1.04	± 1.96	NS Do not reject H_{01}
Total	5.29						

Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 47$, critical t-value = ± 1.96

The t-test analysis in table 2 above indicates that the calculated t- value is 1.04 while the critical t-value is ± 1.96 at .05 level of significance. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t- value. Thus, going by the decision rule, there is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female school counsellors roles in improving the academic achievements of secondary school student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The research hypothesis tried to investigate if there is a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female school counsellors roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone. The analysis of the t-test comparison according to Table 5 showed that the computed t (1.04) is less than the critical t-value (± 1.96) at .05 level of significance. Thus, going by the decision rule, there is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female school counsellors roles in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student's using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

The findings is in line with the findings of [13]; [11]; and [4] who held that counsellors could mend the gap between the theory and practice of REBT. In the same line of thought [7] contended that REBT counsellors with high efficacy are more likely to increase student academic achievement.[15] purported that students are more successful when school counsellors have high efficacy beliefs through ABCDEF model. In another study conducted by [16], he discovered that personality traits, self-perceptions, and drive influence REBT counsellor's efficacy. Hence, the researcher discovered critically that low self-efficacy has the potential to impede the ability of REBT counsellors from functioning optimally during counselling for the enhancement of students academic excellence in the classroom and educational settings. This by implication portends that students with lower self-efficacy as a result of irrational thought may have difficulty identifying how they feel and adapting to problem situations.

Educational Implication of the Findings

The finding of this study holds implication for students, teachers, academically –at –risk learners, and practicing counsellors in Enugu Education Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria.

As a result of exposure to REBT, students would no longer re-indoctrinate themselves with faulty assumptions and irrational thought. Academically-at-risk learners would also learn to think logically and scientifically about their thoughts and emotions in turn, would be prepared to face the challenges that lie ahead of them in a rational and self-helping manner. They will believe in their ability to succeed, develop positive attitude to school and learning, reduce anxiety and improve on their academic achievement.

In addition, the significant effects of gender on treatment outcomes have implications for counsellors to adopt appropriate intervention strategies that would take those variables into cognizance.

Moreover, efforts must be geared towards ensuring practicing counsellors to update their skills in order to effectively utilize REBT and other psychological treatments for learners in order to make them actualize their academic potentials.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, Counsellors role in improving the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Student’s using Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in Enugu Education Zone Enugu State, Nigeria are as follows: mending the gap between the theory and practice of REBT to enhance students’ academic Achievements, efficacy to match personality trait enhances students Academic Achievements, addresses unhealthy negative emotions to be a viable intervention for helping students achieve their potential in the classroom and in life while living happier in the process, prepares students using their educational resources (disputation and verbalization) to enhance academic excellence and students actualization of their individual goals, help students creates vocational opportunities options and awareness, help students foster career management strategies by helping individuals develop the skills to effectively manage their careers, help students to develop high self-esteem, positive self-concept, and good personality, assist in the need to balance the multiple roles assumed by individuals throughout their career development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. Schools should plan their time table to create room for counsellors to use REBT to assist students develop strong positive attitude towards their education.
2. The school counsellor in collaboration with the classroom teacher should identify students who need help and take active steps in the implementation of the cognitive, techniques required to assist the ailing students in their academic pursuit.

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