

Counselors Perception of Cognitive Restructuring as a Counseling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Ani, N.G

Department of Guidance and Counselling Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT, Enugu Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study investigated counsellors' perception of cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study and was tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This was done with particular reference to the location of the schools of the respondents. The population of the study is 105 Guidance Counsellors currently serving in the 291 government owned secondary schools in Enugu State. Out of 105 copies of questionnaire developed by the researcher and distributed, 96 copies were returned signifying 91.43%. The 96 copies were used to collect the data for the study using self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher called counsellors' perception of cognitive restructuring for Self esteem Scale (CPOCR.FSES). The instrument was face validated by three (3) experts: one in measurement and evaluation and two others in Guidance and counselling Department of Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Cronbach Alpha Reliability estimate was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. Data collected for this study were analyzed using mean, grand mean and standard deviation, to answer the one research question. The one research hypothesis was tested using t-test statistic. The result showed that cognitive restructuring is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. Thus there is a significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends, among others, that the Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) should assist experienced/teachers who hitherto have been serving as school counsellors by appointment to acquire university education in guidance and counselling for self improvement.

Keywords: Counsellors, Perception, Cognitive, Restructuring and Self-Esteem

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive restructuring is a psychotherapeutic process of learning how to identify and dispute irrational thoughts which could lead to cognitive destructions if left untreated. Cognitive restructuring is an aspect of the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Cognitive

restructuring of counselling is a problem-focused psychotherapy that improves psychosocial functioning of people. It is a self-directing approach that enables individuals to critically examine their behaviours in line with approved behaviours in their society. Behaviours

are acquired, internalized and sustained by individuals mainly through social interaction in their society.

Thus, internalized behavior can be unlearned through cognitive restructuring. The strategy was propounded by Albert Ellis, in the mid 1950s. In cognitive restructuring, one's mind tries to reinforce something that is negative and make it stand real and accurate. The concern here is to see what can be done to improve the distorted mind of the client. Cognitive restructuring is a useful tool for understanding and turning around negative thinking. It helps individuals to put unhappy, negative thoughts "under the microscope", challenging them and in many cases re-scripting the negative thinking that lies behind them. In doing this, it can help one approach situations in a positive frame of mind.

The guidance counselors may use cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to control and change negative thoughts, which are sometimes linked with damaging behaviours caused by low self-esteem. The skills of confrontation and self-control could be appropriate while using cognitive restructuring as a strategy to enhance self-esteem in secondary school students. Further-more, [1], found out that cognitive restructuring helped participants who experienced severe grief and also reduced the symptoms of Post Traumatized Stress Disorder (PTSD). The researcher looks at counsellors'

perception of cognitive restructuring as a strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu state. Cognitive restructuring is based on helping students to,

- know they can change their negative thinking patterns,
- drop irrational thoughts for rational ones,
- develop self-confidence,
- have a change in thought lines and feelings.

This is a core part of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). It is one of the most effective psychological treatments for common problems like depression and anxiety disorders. It can be used to overcome negative thinking. Cognitive restructuring is a useful technique for understanding unhappy feelings and moods, and for challenging the sometimes wrong 'automatic beliefs' that can be behind them. CBT can be used to control and change negative thoughts, which are sometimes linked with damaging behaviours. [2] sees cognitive restructuring as a rational emotive therapeutic approach that restructures irrational behaviours through didactic approach.

This involves the application of real teaching via philosophical discussions and advice-giving processes to replace old ideas with new modes of logical thinking in order to function well and fit into the main stream of life. Counsellors using

cognitive restructuring technique of counselling should emphasize and encourage clients to imbibe the culture of self-control, self-analysis, self-instruction, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement. This strategy also encompasses confrontation ability or skill inform of shock treatment to elicit positive changes from clients. In addition, cognitive restructuring is a veritable tool that controls the excesses of an individual's behavior by teaching him/her to modify undesirable behaviours.

Thus, cognitive restructuring involves encoding and decoding of rational and irrational thoughts respectively through the skills of firmness, attention, caring, analysis, explanation and assertion. For illustration, a client who feels that he should commit suicide because no girl among his mates has agreed to be his girlfriend needs cognitive restructuring. He should be made to understand that it is illogical to think that everybody must be loved by everybody. That his illogical thoughts and feelings need to be restructured to enable him realize that perhaps he had not talked to the right person that loves him either among his mates or outside the school environment. He needs teaching and explanations to change his mind and come to terms with his world. Another scholar, [3] in his study on, „Strategies to Build Healthy Self-Esteem“ proposed that an individual can replace negative self-talk with positive statements. In other words, when an

individual comes up with the understanding that something positive needs to be said to him/herself, he or she does it daily and positive script is created as a result.

Unfortunately, according to [4], secondary schools in Enugu state has 105 guidance counsellors in the 291 government owned secondary schools in the state. This to a very large extent is likely to hinder the work of counselling in secondary schools in Enugu State. This means that most secondary schools in the state are likely not to have trained and experienced counsellors who are competent and qualified to handle the problems students face in their growth process. The few trained and experienced ones are overworked as they try to reach out to vulnerable youths in schools. Some schools are yet to enjoy the presence of guidance counsellors and so may not even know their functions. Guidance counsellors are experts in applied psychology and professionally trained to take care of educational, vocational and socio/personal aspects of client's life. Lack of experienced guidance counsellors in Enugu State slows down this aspect of guidance services which is applied in cognitive restructuring for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students. Judging from the function of cognitive restructuring, do counsellors regard this strategy as appropriate for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu state?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to determine counsellors' perception of cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. Specifically the study aims at;

1. determining counsellors' perception of cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State,

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question guided the study.

1. What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect

of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following research hypothesis guided the study and were tested at .05 level of significance.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less

experienced guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive the survey research design. The area of the study was Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for this study comprised 105 practicing guidance counsellors in all the 291 government owned secondary schools in the 6 Education Zones of Enugu State. Of these 59 lived in urban areas while 46 lived in rural area. The population is small so no sampling was done. The instrument used for data

collection was a 4 item questionnaire called Cognitive Restructuring for Enhancing Self-Esteem Scale (CRS.FESES) The instrument had a 4-point response scale with response category of Strongly Agree (SA)----4 points; Agree(A)-----3 points; Disagree (D)----2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD)—1 point. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Guidance and counselling department and one from

measurement and evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State university of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate and it yielded a reliability coefficient of .79. The study was carried out in all the 291 secondary schools in Enugu State. One hundred and five copies of the questionnaire were distributed but ninety-six copies were retrieved from the respondents representing 91.43 percent return rate. Data collected were analyzed

using mean with standard deviation. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed while any mean below 2.50 was regarded as Disagreed. The one null hypothesis were tested at .05 level of significance using t-test statistic. If the calculated t-value was less than the critical table value of +1.96 for the required degree of freedom of 94, the null hypothesis was not rejected but if the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical, t-value, the null hypothesis was rejected.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean Perception Scores (\bar{X}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Guidance Counsellors on Cognitive Restructuring as a Counselling Strategy For Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

Table 1: Mean Perception Scores (\bar{X}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Guidance Counsellors on Cognitive Restructuring as a Counselling Strategy For Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. **n = 96**

S/ N	Cognitive Restructuring as a strategy for Enhancing Self Esteem among Secondary School Students are based on:	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Knowing they can change their negative thinking pattern	5	11	19	61	1.58	0.89	Disagree
2	Dropping irrational thoughts for rational ones	49	27	13	7	3.22	0.94	Agree
3	Developing self-confidence	47	33	9	7	3.25	0.90	Agree
4	Having a change of feelings	27	54	9	6	3.06	0.79	Agree
Grand Mean						2.77		Agree

Results from Table 1 showed that the respondents agreed with 3 out of the 4 items raised (2, 3 and 4) as guidance counsellors' perception of counselling strategies that are related to cognitive restructuring as appropriate for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. The respondents' mean scores for these items 3.22, 3.25 and 3.06 are above the cut off points. They were accepted as agree based on the decision that their mean ratings are more than the cut-off point of 2.50. The Table showed that the

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced

respondents disagreed with the remaining 1 item (1) with 1.58 as their mean score. Their standard deviation is small in all the items signifying that the respondents' responses are homogenous. The table also indicated a grand mean score of 2.77. Based on the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents' data, the answer to research question 1 is that Cognitive restructuring is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) for

enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Counsellor on Cognitive Restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a Counselling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Difference Between the (\bar{X}) Mean Perception Scores of Experienced and less Experienced Guidance

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Difference Between the Mean Perception Scores of Experienced and less Experienced Guidance Counsellor on Cognitive Restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a Counselling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Status	N	\bar{X}	S ²	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Experienced Guidance Counsellor	53	3.17	0.59	94	2.01	± 1.96	S Reject Ho ₁
Less Experienced Counsellor	43	1.77					
Total	96	4.94					

Significant at $P < .05$, $df = 94$, critical t-value = ± 1.96

The t-test analysis in Table 2 above indicates that the calculated t- value is 2.01 while the critical t-value is ± 1.96 at .05 level of significance. This implies that the calculated t-value is more than the critical t- value. Thus, going by the decision rule, there is a significant

difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The result in Table 1 showed that cognitive restructuring is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The findings are consistent with the findings of [5]. He found out that while building healthy self-esteem, an individual can replace self-talk with

positive statements. Hence, for him cognitive restructuring is a useful technique for understanding unhappy feelings and for changing the sometimes wrong „automatic beliefs“ that can be behind them.

The first research hypothesis tried to examine if there is a significant difference in the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced Guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. The analysis of the t-test comparison according to Table 2 showed that the computed t (2.01) is more than the critical t-value (± 1.96) at .05 level of significance. Thus, going by the decision

rule, there is a significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced Guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State is hereby not rejected. This finding is at variance with that of [6] who found that most secondary schools have very insignificant number of experienced guidance counsellors in Enugu State.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively from the above analysis and interpretations done and the information from related literature, it implies that

1. Cognitive restructuring is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

2. There is a significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

From the findings the researcher deduced that the problem is not the guidance counsellors having vague perception of cognitive restructuring strategy but instead they are comfortable with the strategy that can help in enhancing self-esteem. The obvious problem is that secondary schools in Enugu State are handicapped by drought of qualified school counsellors./experienced guidance counsellors inculcating self-esteem traits in students requires sufficient number of qualified guidance counsellors. The

implication of less experienced/insufficient guidance counsellors is that secondary school students in Enugu State are left to suffer the consequences of low self-esteem such as lack of self- confidence, having to live in fear and anxiety. Their thought lines have been-found to be more in the negative and all these tend to affect their academic performances [3]. By implication some secondary school students who find themselves in such situations are not likely to benefit from

guidance services that could positively impact on their self-esteem. The implication of the findings of this study to guidance counsellors is a demand for

hard work and better understanding of all that are expected of them as professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve this mission the following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

1. The Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) should assist experienced/teachers who hitherto have been serving as school counsellors by appointment to acquire university education in

guidance and counselling for self improvement.

2. The Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) should assist teachers who hitherto have been serving as school counsellors by appointment to acquire university education in guidance and counselling for self improvement.

REFERENCES

1. Chukwuka, E. (2013). Adolescent Problems and their Counselling Strategies in Enugu State. *Doublecrist.com*
2. Karahan, F. (2007). Language attitudes of Turkish students towards foreign language and foreign language achievement. *Dil Dergisi* 130, 37-52.
3. Nduka, O. (2005). *Cognitive Restructuring*. Lagos: Behenu Publishers.
4. Maertz, K. (2015). Mental Health Centre, University of Alberta. *Strategies to build healthy self-*

esteem. Berkeley: University of California Press.

5. Post Primary School management Board (PPSMB), (2015). *Educational services Department, Guidance and Counselling Unit*.
6. Ukwueze, A. C. (2010). Effects of cognitive and modelling techniques of counselling on students' study behaviours and academic achievement. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.