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CHAPTER 14

EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING ON TRUANCY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IKOT EKPENE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE

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14.1 INTRODUCTION

A cursory observation reveals that despite the huge investments made to reposition education in Akwa Ibom State, there is still a yawning gap in respect of the dividends. There have been various cases of truant behaviour among the students and even the teachers. This has affected learning and teaching and the production of the expected disciplined manpower for the state. Various publications indicate that the general public and the government have become increasingly concerned over the great increase in poor discipline and truancy in particular, among students in the secondary schools.

Truancy is any intentional unauthorized or illegal absence from compulsory schooling. The term describes absence caused by students

on their own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate 'excused' absence, such as ones related to medical conditions. The term's exact meaning differs from school to school, and is usually explicitly defined in the school's handbook of policies and procedures (Home-school 2005).

It also refers to a student who attends school but does not go to classes. In some schools, truancy may result in not being able to graduate or to receive credit for class attended, until the time lost to truancy is made up through a combination of detention, fines or summer school. The National Centre for School Engagement (2012), posited that truancy is any unexcused absence from school and that states enact their own school attendance laws. State law determines:- the age at which a child is required to begin attending school, the age at which a

child may legally drop out of school, and the number of unexcused absences at which a student is considered legally truant.

The possible causes and contributing factors to truancy are numerous and diverse. They must be recognized and an attempt at resolving them must be made if any far reaching impact is to be made in each individual cause of truancy. Ukanyiroha (1998), stated that truancy is a threefold problem that stems from the child's family, the school and the community. Child contributing factors include poor self concept, low self esteem, poor academic performance, socially isolated, poor interpersonal skills, lack of positive peer relationship at school, mental and emotional instability, childhood depression, unidentified learning disability, language barriers, poor health, substance abuse, fear of school teachers and administrators' inexperience, teenage pregnancy and poor parenting. Family factors include parental lack of appreciation for the value of education, parents as school dropouts, financial difficulties, family instability and child abuse. Again, Sambo (2005), averred that truancy is one of the behavioural problems of young people whose cause can be traced from their homes and families.

Over protection of children by their parents could lead to preventing such children from going to school on reasons as bad weather, delayed breakfast, mother's ill health and new baby born on important feast day and so on. The cost of truancy is high, the direct and indirect consequences of truancy for individuals, schools, communities, and society in the short and long-term are so serious. Again, truancy is so prevalent, that the office of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention named truancy reduction as one of its natural priorities for 2003 (Henry and Huizinga, 2007). Truancy has been clearly identified as one of the early warning signs that youths potentially are headed for delinquent activity, social isolation, or educational failure. Research has shown that truancy is related to delinquency, substance use and abuse, high school dropout, suicidal thoughts and attempt, and early sexual intercourse, (Mora, 2011).

It is believed that these behavioural excesses and inappropriateness amongst the students can be modified. Efforts at addressing the problem do not seem successful because of the reported increases rather than expected decreases. However, many of the

researchers on behavioural modification have paid much attention to the use of cognitive restructuring for modifying the undesirable behaviour among the students. Cognitive restructuring as an alternative therapy for the treatment of behavioural problems, is conceived with the aim of finding a psychological solution to curbing truancy in schools, as against the commonly used strategies by school administrations.

Cognitive restructuring is a set of techniques for becoming more aware of our thoughts and for modifying them when they are distorted or are not useful. This approach does not involve distorting reality in a positive direction or attempting to believe the unbelievable. Rather, it uses reason and evidence to replace distorted thought patterns with more accurate, believable, and functional ones (Binggeli, 2012). Similarly, Mora (2011), opined that cognitive therapy dwells exclusively in the present. It allows the students to make their choices and understand the existing alternative which may appear better than their perceived situations.

Furthermore, cognitive restructuring is resorted to in cases where students can not adjust to their social

environment or find learning difficult. School classes are all social organization of some kind and they can lack healthy relationship among the students. High value is placed on social adjustment everywhere else, the home and the school, hence teacher and parents provide the child with every opportunity for this (Mora, 2011).

14.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Success in life, at school, play ground and work depends on ability and social adjustment (Alhassan, 1992). This implies a concern with behaviour which is the main concern of psychologist, as behaviour is a vital aspect in any successful teaching and learning process. In Akwa Ibom State, since the inception of the free and compulsory education, the Teaching Service Commission through the State Secondary Education Board (SSEB) has set up various machineries to combat truancy within the secondary school system. One of the ways include the police patrol service. A child seen wandering on the road or caught hawking during school hours is to be arrested and put under custody. The parents will be equally arrested and they will be made to pay fine before their wards are released to them. This process has succeeded to some

extent, but the police have not been able to cover a greater percentage of the state because the state is very large and the number of patrol vans deployed for such purpose is insufficient. That informs why students are still seen on the streets during school hours. Akwa Ibom State is bedevilled with problems of truancy among students in the secondary schools. These are commonly manifested in non-attendance of schools, delinquent behaviours, unruly demonstrations and violence in schools. That is why this study is designed to investigate the effect of cognitive restructuring strategy of truancy among secondary school students in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

14.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at finding ways of using cognitive restructuring as an alternative therapy for the treatment of behaviour problem of truancy in schools in Akwa Ibom State

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- i. There is no significant difference in the mean attendance of students exposed to experimental

cognitive restructuring and those not exposed to the cognitive restructuring.

- ii. There is no significant difference in the mean attendance of male and female students exposed to cognitive restructuring.

14.4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research is a behaviour modification process; therefore, it will lay credence to some of the behavioural modification theories with particular reference to the social cognitive learning model. These theories include:

The operant (instructional) conditioning model and the social cognitive learning model.

Researchers defined the term operant conditioning; as roughly changing of behaviour by the use of reinforcement which is given after the desired response. Skinner identified three types of responses or operant that can follow behaviour as neutral, reinforcers and punsters. Skinner believed that the best way to understand behaviour is to look at the causes of an action and its consequences. Social learning theory posited that cognition and social

mediations influence human behaviour. The theory broadens behaviour learning principles by extending them to the characteristically human aspects of persons and their environments. The theorists stressed that imitation and reinforcement are similar in several aspects. Both terms refer to the tendency children have to act the way their significant others do. They sought ways to overcome the limitations which have been pointed out by critics of the earlier work of Hull and Skinner (Akinade, 2012). This theory may classify one's understanding of how children move from dependence to independence. It also involves the ways they learn by identifying with and imitating adults, peers, teachers and parents and how different approaches to children rearing may influence personality. Studies and experiences have shown that learning or behaviour may be acquired when individuals observe, analyze and emulate the behaviour of significant others.

14.5 RESEARCH METHODS

The study used pretest post-test control group experimental design, the design is considered appropriate and suitable because the study aims at influencing the cognitive system of

truant secondary school students, with a view to observing the changing of perceptions of subjects and related stake holders, for the restructuring of the cognitive capacity of students.

The study was conducted in five (5) public secondary schools within Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study consisted of two thousand seven hundred and sixty (2760) students. Ninety (90) of the truant students were randomly selected as sample for the study and were divided into two; 45 as experimental group and 45 as control group respectively.

14.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researchers used the interview method to collect the data. A structured question instrument for the collection of data was designed by the researchers. The location was the school premises, after explaining the purpose of the research to the parties involved, the researchers solicited for their maximum co-operation and sincerity throughout the period of the research work. The experimental group was conditioned, observed, and made ready for comparison with the control group.

Table 1: Programme for Cognitive Restructuring (0 - 5weeks)

Week	Activity	Subject	Remarks
0	Clients identification/ classification into groups	Students	
1	Interview	Experimental group	
2	Counselling	Experimental group	Participants were given exercise books and biro pen to encourage attendance.
3	Visit to social model	Experimental group	
4	Counselling	Experimental group	Participants were given exercise books and biro pens.
5	(a) Talk by a social model (b) Counselling	Experimental group Experimental group	Light refreshment was served to participants.

Field work 2013**14.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Experimental group was observed for five (5) weeks and after treatments, weekly average and variances were recorded for both groups and was conducted for comparing the means. The t-test was used to analyze the difference in the mean.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean attendance of students exposed to experimental cognitive restructuring and those who are not exposed to it. To test this hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation of experimental and control groups were obtained. The t-test (of independent sample) was computed to determine the significant difference of the means. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.

Table 2: t-test analysis of difference between the mean of experimental and control groups on school-attendance (N=90)

Attendance	NI	XI	SDI	N2	X2	SD2	DF	t-cal	T-table Value	Decision
Attendance in 5 weeks	45	71.6	10.38	45	36.5	11.28	88	9.51	1.96	H01 rejected

Field work 2013 $P > 0.05$

In table 2, the calculated value was 9.51 of the experimental and control groups on school attendance. It also reveals the t-table value of 1.96 at the 48 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Furthermore, it shows that the t-calculated value 9.51 is greater than the t-table value 1.96. Though the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean attendance of students exposed to experimental cognitive restructuring and those not exposed to was rejected. Hence it is concluded that there is a difference in five (5) weeks attendance between experimental and control groups after the treatment. By implication, this means that Cognitive Restructuring (CR) is effective in stimulating school attendance.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean attendance of male and female students exposed to cognitive restructuring. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1.3 below.

Table 3: t-test analysis of difference in mean attendance between male and female students (N=45)

Attendance	NI	XI	SDI	N2	X2	Sd2	DF	t-cal	T-table Value	Decision
Attendance in 5 weeks	24	46.1	7.4	21	46.3	6.9	43	1.17	2.01	H02 accepted

Fieldwork 2013

P < 0.05

Table 3 revealed that the t-calculated value of the male and female students on school attendance was 1.17. The table also shows the t-table value of 2.01 at 43 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since t-calculated value 1.17 is less than the table value 2.01, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean attendance of male and female students exposed to cognitive restructuring is therefore accepted. Thus, it is concluded that, there is no significance difference in five (5) weeks attendance between the male and female students in the treatment of cognitive restructuring. This implies that in relation to stimulating school attendance, there is no significant difference in Cognitive Restructuring between male and female students.

14.8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis in the study affirms that there is significant difference in the mean attendance of students exposed to cognitive restructuring. The significant improvement in class attendance by the experimental group which improved gradually between the 1st and 5th week of application of treatment shows that cognitive restructuring is necessary as a professional help for people with truancy behaviour of no effective change.

This finding is in agreement with what National Centre for School Engagement (NCSE 2012) recommends that for effective truancy reduction programmes:

- i. There is need for a continuum of supports including meaningful incentives for good attendance and consequences for poor attendance.
- ii. Parent/guardian involvement, or whole family involvement.
- iii. Collaboration among community actors such as law enforcement, mental health workers, mentors and social providers, in addition to educators.

- iv. Concrete and measurable goals for programme performance and students' performance. Good record keeping and on-going evaluation of progress towards those goals. Again, it is also in consonance with Maryer and Sulzer (1990), who postulated that positive behaviour supports children in elementary and middle school grades where the impact is thought to be greatest. Also, specifically for those children who demonstrate anti-social behaviour, they showed that when pro-support was not given to students behaviour such as truancy, dropping-out and aggression increased.

They claimed that punishment based interventions actually increased the behaviour they are meant to reduce. The study also shows that treatment as a stimulus contributes to restructuring of behaviour. This agrees with the finding of Ker et al (2007), on the effect of rational emotive behaviour, one voter's attitude. The first hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups in their attitudes toward voting, the finding shows the mean score of the treatment group

attitude towards voting is significantly higher than that of the control group. This shows that there is significant difference in the experimental group which supports the finding of hypothesis number one of this study.

The findings of the second hypothesis of the study revealed that there is no significant difference in the means attendance of male and female students exposed to cognitive restructuring. The analysis indicates that the application of cognitive restructuring is effective in the conditioning of both male and female students. The significant improvement in class attendance by subjects of both sexes within the weeks of application of the stimuli shows that Stimulus-Response (SR) is necessary in any cognitive restructuring as a professional help for both male and female students with truant behaviour.

This finding is in agreement with what some overseas researchers stated that there is no difference in the levels of truancy reported for males and females, Gray and Jesson (1990), Haddon (1996), Smith (1996), Stoll (1995) and Witney (1994). Malcom et al (2003) also noted that recent research on truancy in the seven local

education authorities report that the number of learners in secondary schools admitting truancy was almost equal for boys and girls.

The Oxford Encyclopaedia (1998), discusses that clinical treatment are used to change maladaptive patterns of behaviour using techniques that are derived from experiments. It is based on this view that neurotic behaviour learnt in the same way as abnormal behaviour may be eliminated by manipulation of the surroundings, which allows the subject to learn new and better response behaviour learning techniques developed by psychologists and ideas about therapeutic applications of conditioning. A classic text in this field was Wolpers psychotherapy by reciprocal inhibition (1988). He described how he made cats to be fearful and then cured them by inducing them to eat closer and closer to the source of their fear.

Behaviour therapy has become a popular form of desensitization to modifying anti-social behaviour in the classroom. Generally however, the co-operation of clients is very necessary, and more recent approaches focus on the client's beliefs about what

they are able to do. This is what is referred to as cognitive restructuring.

14.9 CONCLUSION

Truancy appears to be a universal problem. Research indicates that secondary school truants do not come from any particular socio-economic background. Learners play truant due to predisposing intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The negative consequences of truancy include poor scholastic performance, criminal behaviour and school dropout.

Truancy by a child is generally a warning that he may have emotional problems and or may be developing delinquent tendencies. According to Tyeman as cited in Yakasai (1994), at least half of the children who are truants are maladjusted and are bound to commit other offences. Not only that, truancy has been identified as one of the major problems in different communities' worldover. It is an educational, social and law enforcement problem facing children. Its effect may be devastating to the child, the school and the society. In the light of this, it is necessary to find a lasting solution to this behaviour disorder.

Findings of this research showed that there is significant difference in the mean attendance of truant students exposed to cognitive restructuring than those not exposed. This shows that, cognitive restructuring is effective in modifying truant behaviour. Therefore, it should be adopted in Akwa Ibom State.

Finally, all role-players in education will need to work together, make a concerted effort in reducing truancy and continue to learn from the experiences of others when embarking on truancy intervention project.

14.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the experiments led to several suggestions and the following recommendations are proffered.

- i. The application of cognitive restructuring strategy should be used by counsellors, teachers and school administrators for the treatment of truancy in schools.
- ii. School counsellors should make themselves available to students by conducting seminars and workshops to make students

know the negative effects of truancy.

iii. Government agencies should address problems related to schools at the base so as to justify their huge investment on the education sector.

iv. School authorities should forge a link between parents and the community, and involve other government departments as well as the private sector in creating awareness about truancy and its negative consequences.

REVISION QUESTIONS

1. What is truancy?
2. What are the ways of minimizing truancy in the Nigerian Secondary Schools?
3. What are the bad effects of truancy?

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