

EFFECT OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (REBT) ON PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AT GOVERNMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE POTISKUM, YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) on Perception of Student Involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria. The study has three objectives with corresponding three research hypotheses. The study adopted Pretest-Posttest quasi-experimental research design. The population of the study comprised one hundred and forty seven (147) students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical Potiskum. Two instruments were used in the study. A self-designed Proforma and adapted Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) were used to collect data from the participants. The Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) was pilot tested and reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was found. The data obtained were analyzed using paired sample t-test for the hypothesis 1 and ANCOVA for hypothesis 2 and 3. The findings obtained showed that, REBT was an effective intervention therapy on perception of student involved in examination malpractice ($t = -7,227, p = 0.000, p < .05$), similarly for the effect of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice, the result significantly differ according to the age $\{F (7.537), p = .003\}$. Moreover, for the effect of REBT on perception of student involved in examination malpractice, the result significantly differ according to class level $\{F (2.604), p = .002\}$ respectively. The study recommended that REBT could be used as an effective intervention on perception of students involved in examination malpractice according age as well as class level.

Keywords: Rational emotive behaviour therapy, Perception, Age and Examination malpractice

Introduction

Examination could also be seen as one of the most objective technique used in the measurement of learning outcomes at all levels of education in Nigeria and the world over. The use of examinations for placement and promotion of students from one level of education into another level and for certification of students has brought about competition among students which has resulted to cheating behaviour in examination (Nnam & Otu, 2015). This is so, because students at all levels of education desire to pass examinations to enable them transit from one level of education to the next or secure admission into institution of higher learning. Examination Malpractice is a phenomenon of great concern not only to stakeholders in the educational sector but worldwide. Oluakin (2008) warn that examination malpractice is a concern not only to government, but globally. Without valid and reliable examinations and results, there can be no national development either socially, economically, scientifically or technologically. The forms of examination malpractice are many, these include giraffing, expo, lateral connection; tattoo, E-cheating, leakage, impersonation, collusion among others, and they are becoming complex every now and then (Alhassan & Adamma, 2017). This therefore, implies that, it is a concern not only to the stakeholders in the education sector but to the general public.

However, the perception that some students hold about examination malpractice varied and depends on the person involved. Students perceive examination malpractice differently even among themselves. Some perceive it as a serious problem in school and in the society which needs to be addressed while some perceive it as a normal process of writing examination without which they will not pass; still others are indifferent about examination malpractice. For the students, examination malpractice is an academic crime as Kleiner cited in Bernedette and Obioma (2012) that the majority of the students did not believe cheating was always wrong. Before now, to be caught cheating was a thing of shame, but students now glorify examination malpractice (Cornelius-Ukpepi, 2010). Moreover, reports show that students are ready to pay any prize, cash or kind to pass examination they did not prepare for (Bernedette & Obioma, 2012). Many reasons have been given for the prevalence of examination malpractice. These include inability of students to cope with school activities, inadequate preparation for examinations, the desire by candidates to pass examinations at all costs and too much emphasis that is placed on paper qualification (Ojerinde, 2010). This therefore, becomes a problem that has infected and affected all stakeholders in the educational sector and has posed a very serious obstacle to education standards and credibility of school certificates awarded. However, many strategies have been advanced in the literature and devised by governments to curb this menace, but, as a monster, it is still thriving and looming in the school system (Onyechere, 2008).

From independence till date, individuals, missionaries, communities, groups and governments have established schools in an effort of ensuring production of a generation of hardworking, selfless and creative citizens. However, it has become difficult to realize this because of examination malpractice which has become rampant probably because of some irrational fears, beliefs and thinking of the students about the examination in particular and education in general. Similarly, Awujo and Kennedy (2018) also explained that “a lot of students spend quality time engaging in unprofitable ventures instead of engaging in their studies, they are often distracted by activities such as; viewing television, being on the internet, partying, enjoying music, chatting on phone, procrastinating, and lack ability to organize learning materials”. These in return have developed the students to have fears, irrational thinking and beliefs about the examination which resulted into doing what is humanly possible to excel through at any particular level of the examination. Moreover, due to ill-preparedness on the part of students for examination, many students have resorted to examination malpractice leading to high negation on genuine learning i.e. increase in the number of dishonest, half-baked graduates, incessant cancellation of examinations and results and production of quack professionals, among others (Jekayinfa, 2007). However, behaviour is determined by belief system; hence changing irrational beliefs will lead to change of the associated behaviour (Dryden, 2003). This means that if students can be made to think rationally using counselling therapies, they are likely to act against the society’s distorted beliefs, of making its citizens to adopt illicit behaviour of “arriving” by all means (Ojogbane&Amali, 2016). Therefore, in a bid to changing students’ attitude towards this menace of examination malpractice in our educational settings, the field of Counselling Psychology adopts counselling therapies. One of such therapies or skills to be applied in this study is Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy.

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is the independent variable for this study. It is a counselling technique that believes amongst others that an individual is both rational and irrational. When thinking rational, he/she is effective, happy and competent while thinking irrational he/she shows emotional problems like guilt, anxiety, anger, depression, hatred and ineffectiveness (Froggatt, 2005). As every individual is responsible for his/her own actions, feelings, thinking and has the ability to intervene between environmental input and emotional output, therefore REBT, was selected in this study based on its philosophical underpinning that thoughts, feelings, and behaviours interact and significantly affect each other. Similarly, REBT, as a technique, attempts to change individual’s behaviours by confronting their irrational fears, beliefs, values and attitudes which they have imbibed from the processes of socialization and persuade them to adopt a rational thought process (Ellis, 2006). Hence, REBT as a

counselling technique was selected for this study based on the assumption that the therapy seeks to change maladaptive behaviours by confronting and disputing irrational beliefs that are perceived as been at the root of maladaptive behaviours. Similarly, evidence in literature, has been experimentally proven that REBT was effective for changing irrational beliefs and associated behaviours, changing wrong values, curbing examination malpractice behaviour, test anxiety, poor reading culture, poor time management, fear of failure, reduction of substance abuse, and poor study habit to a good learning outcome (Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, Saundres, Galloway, & Shwey 2004; Abdul & Abu, 2009; Eifediyi, 2015; Ntamu, 2017; Awujo & Kennedy, 2018).

Therefore, looking at literature on effectiveness of REBT, it becomes justifiable to investigate the effect of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum and based on the tenants of REBT, the researchers believes that, students involved in examination malpractice could modify their perception, thinking and behaviours as several studies on the effect of REBT was found effective. Therefore, it is against this background that this study was conceived.

Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of Examination Malpractice in recent time at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State have assumed alarming trend more than any other time. Peleg (2009) explained that a lot of factors have been observed to have influenced the students into examination malpractice. Some of these factors are fear of evaluation, delinquency, social failure, depression, shame, aggression, low-motivation, negative self-evaluation and low concentration. Other negative connotations include low self-esteem, reading difficulties and failing scores, disruptive classroom behaviour, negative thoughts about the school, feelings of unease and fear as well as memory interruption, particularly concerning phonological processing are many problems that has been linked to students to experiencing examination malpractice (Keogh & French, 2001). Therefore, it stands to reason also that, perception of students involved in examination malpractice needs attention to modify the irrational thinking and fears about the examination in order to stop them from further involvement in to the examination malpractice which would affect the quality of the future teachers' productivity. Therefore, the researchers were concerned by this situation and sought to investigate the effect of REBT on perception of student involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. determine the effect of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State
2. determine whether the effects of REBT on perception of students involved in examination at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum differ according to age
3. determine whether the effects of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum differ according to class levels

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the posttest mean scores of perception of students involved in examination malpractices exposed to REBT and Control group at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State

HO₂: The effects of REBT on perception of students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum does not significantly differ according to age

HO₃: The effects of REBT on perception of students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum does not significantly differ according to class level

Methodology

The study adopted quasi-experimental design. Awotunde and Ugodulunwa (2004) opined that quasi-experimental design is utilized where it is not possible to carry out random assignment of subject to groups. Similarly, Harrington and Harrigan (2006) described a quasi-experimental study as a type of experimental study that determines the effect of a treatment paradigm in a non-randomized sample. Moreover, Quasi-experimental research design could be used in a school setting where it is not always possible to use pure experimental design which they consider as disruption of school activities (Ali, 2006). The population of the study comprises of all students who were involved in Examination Malpractice with the total population of one hundred and forty seven (147) students for the 2019/2020 academic session. Multi-stage sampling technique was used in the study. The first stage was purposive sampling technique to select all students that involved in examination malpractice, this is because, the researchers attempts to select this sample because it appear as being the representative of the population defined by the research problem. The sample students were disproportionately stratified in to the experimental group as well as placebo control group.

The research instruments used for this study are Proforma designed by the researcher and adapted Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ). The Proforma designed by the researcher was used to collect data of students involved in examination malpractice from the examination record office for 2019/2020 academic session. The Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire was adapted from Alutu and Aluede (2016). The instrument was a 24-item questionnaire, which elicited responses on students' personal perception and opinion about examination malpractice. The instrument consisted of two sections (A and B). Section A consists of the respondents' demographic information. While section B consisted of a 24-item questionnaire, which elicited responses on students' personal perception about examination malpractices. The language statement of item statement 1-6, 11, 14, 18, 20 and 23 was modified. The instrument which had earlier been tested for its reliability by Alutu and Aluede (2016) was however further pilot tested by distributing 15 copies of the modified questionnaire by the researchers to ensure its consistency using the Cronbach Alpha statistical method and the reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained. The data was collected in three separate but interconnected phases viz; pre-test, intervention (treatment) and post-test

Stage 1: Pretest

The adapted Examination Malpractice Perception Questionnaire (EMPQ) was administered to both experimental and the control group at this stage.

Stage 2: Treatment

The second stage was on administration of the treatment package (REBT) to experimental group and current health issue (COVID-19) to the control group. The researchers used REBT counselling procedures on the experimental group. The researchers helped the clients to be rational and logical in their thinking. They were thought a simple way of reorganizing their perceptions, thinking, behaviour and attitude about examination malpractice so as to be rational and achieve better goals. In the present research, 9 treatment sessions of 60 minutes was considered based on Ellis's model presented to the clients once in a weekly basis. The sessions were hold at the Government Science and Technical College Potiskum with the participation of all the students in the experimental group.

REBT includes such principles and techniques as the identification of cognitive errors, the musts and the rules, the recognition of core beliefs, challenging irrational beliefs, challenging the musts and the core beliefs, separating the behaviour from the individual and from the acceptance. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistical tool appropriate for testing each hypothesis. Research hypothesis one was analyzed using paired sample t-test, whereby comparing the means score of the measurement of

the participants Posttest. The research hypothesis two and three were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). ANCOVA was used because it removes the effects of some antecedent variable for example Pretest score are used as covariates in Pretest and Posttest. The Level of significance for each test of hypotheses was at 95% confidence level.

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the posttest mean scores of perception of students involved in examination malpractices exposed to REBT and Control group at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State

Table 1: Paired Sample t-test on significant difference between posttest mean score on perception of students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum exposed to REBT and Control Group

Group	N	\bar{X}	StdDev	Std Error Mean	t
Experimental	84	31.35	6.11	1.48	-
Control	63	48.06	9.46	2.29	7.227

In order to test the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between Pretest and Posttest mean score on perception of students involved in examination malpractice exposed to REBT at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, paired sample t-test was performed. From the table 1, there was significant difference between Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical Potiskum. This was based on the t-calculated value ($t = -7.227$, $p = .0000$, $p < .05$). Based on the obtained result a significant difference exists between the post-test scores. Thus, the null hypothesis stating there is no significant difference between the posttest mean scores on perception of students involved in examination malpractices exposed to REBT and Control group at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum, Yobe State Yobe State is hereby rejected.

HO₂: The effects of REBT on perception of students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum does not significantly differ according to age

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance ANCOVA for the significant effect in mean scores of perception of students involved in examination malpractice exposed to REBT in Pretest and Posttest score
Dependent Variable: Post-Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	397.536a	3	132.512	6.203	.003
Intercept	558.675	1	558.675	26.152	.000
Pretest	91.069	1	91.069	4.263	.049
Age	322.011	2	161.006	7.537	.003
Error	555.431	143	21.363		
Total	25549.000	147			
Corrected Total	952.967	146			

a. R Squared = .417 (Adjusted R Squared = .350)

Result on the table 3 showed the null hypothesis which state that the effects of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical Potiskum does not significantly differ according to age is rejected since the table showed an F-value of 7.537 and the p-value of .003 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis is hereby rejected. Thus, the

researchers uphold that there is significant effect of REBT on the mean score on perception of students' involved in examination according to age of the students.

HO₃: The effects of REBT on perception of students' involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum does not significantly differ according to class level

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for the significant effect of mean scores of perception of students exposed to REBT in Pre-test and Post-test according to class level

Dependent Variable: Post-Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	403.511a	3	134.504	2.405	.002
Intercept	672.393	1	672.393	56.089	.000
Pretest	137.361	1	137.361	.181	.017
Class Level	327.986	2	163.993	2.604	.002
Error	549.456	143	21.133		
Total	25549.000	147			
Corrected Total	952.967	146			

a. R Squared = .423 (Adjusted R Squared = .357)

Result on the table 3 showed the null hypothesis which state that the effects of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice at Government Science and Technical College Potiskum does not significantly differ according to class level is rejected since the table showed an F-value of 2.604 and the p-value of .002 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, the researchers uphold that there is significant effect of REBT on the mean score of examination malpractice according to class level of the students.

Discussion

Research hypothesis one tested the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the students' perception involved in examination malpractices exposed to REBT and Control group. From the result presented in the test of hypothesis 1 presented on table 1 showed a significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the students' involved in examination malpractices, meaning that REBT was effective intervention. The experimental group was taught about REBT techniques to manage examination malpractice behaviour after which the experimental group (REBT) showed a significant difference in perception on examination malpractice posttest scores in contrast to the control group who conveyed no significant difference in examination malpractice posttest scores. This results support the earlier findings by Ntamu (2017) who revealed that, REBT had a significant effect on the two variables (wrong values and desire for certificates) of examination malpractice students. The reduction of students' perception on examination malpractice posttest scores may be as a result of exposing them to REBT intervention.

The results presented in table 2 revealed that the effect of REBT on age of perception of student involved in examination malpractice has significantly varies. The effectiveness of the treatment therapy does not depend on a particular age group. All age groups responded to REBT but vary in degree of response across age groups. This has considerable relevance when selecting a therapy for management of examination malpractice students. This finding is in agreement with Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, Saunders, Galloway and Shwery (2004) who indicated that REBT appeared effective for children and adolescents. The finding also negates the earlier findings of Gerald (2009) who find out that adolescent were less responsive to the REBT. However, there is no one way to

practice REBT, which make more relevance to all age group this is because it is “selectively eclectic.” Though it has techniques of its own, it also borrows from other approaches and allows practitioners to use their imagination. There are some basic assumptions and principles, but otherwise it can be varied to suit one’s own style and client group.

The finding of research hypothesis three presented in tables 3 further revealed that the effect of REBT on perception of students involved in examination malpractice significantly differ according to class level of the students, the finding slightly differ from the earlier finding of Yusuf, Yinusa, and Bamgbose (2015) whose findings revealed that there is no significant difference on repossess of undergraduates on REBT and CBT for examination malpractice according to their level of study and academic performance. It is believed that old students have vast experience and have spent years in the school and are used to the environment unlike the students in their first year that are just exposed to the learning environment, they find it difficult to cope with stress and have problem of adjusting to the environment. Students who are not familiar with counselling more especially the first year students will become less responsive to interventions as they don’t have prior experience and with their problems getting broader in scope and increasingly more severe.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, rational emotive behaviour (REBT) was effective treatment therapy on perception of students involved in examination malpractice behaviour at Government Science and Technical Potiskum. The effect of gender alone on treatment therapy was significantly effective. The therapy can be used in a school setting. The study confirmed the researchers’ expectations that the use of REBT can be effective in managing perception of students involved in examination malpractice. Therefore, school guidance counsellors should adopt the use of REBT in management of perception of students involved in examination malpractice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counselling psychologists should be trained and be retrained on REBT as their intervention in the management of perception of students on examination malpractice
2. Ministry of Education should incorporate training in REBT as counselling technique for use with examination malpractice students as part of counsellors educational programme
3. Government should sponsor seminars, workshops and professional counsellors training programmes for counsellors on how treatment therapies would be used more effectively to help examination malpractice students.

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