

Influence of Assertive Behaviour Training on Socially Maladjusted Secondary School Students' in Aba Education Zone, State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the effectiveness of Assertive Behaviour Training on the socially maladjusted students in Aba Educational Zone. There are two research questions and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. The study was a quasi-experimental research; the study adopted a pre-test-post-test-control group design. The population sample consisted of 38,843 comprising of all the senior students' in the secondary schools of 119 secondary schools in Aba education zone. Three schools were purposively chosen in three Local Government Areas out of four (4) L.G.As for the study from which 24 purposively selected students were used for the study were derived. The researchers made and validated instrument titled "maladjusted checklist for students (SMCS)" served as a guide in the observation method employed in data collection for the study. The study has a reliability index of 0.76 respectively. The data derived was computed and statistically analyzed using

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mean for the study questions and analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) for testing the hypotheses. The study revealed that Assertive Behaviour Training reduced social maladjustment among students'. The study concludes that Assertive Behaviour Training (ABT) is found to be effective in reducing social maladjustment among stud. The study also recommends that Assertive Behaviour Training module be incorporated in the school curriculum for both junior and senior secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria.

Keywords

Assertive Behaviour Training, Education, Secondary School Students, Social Maladjustment..

Introduction

Education is known as the vehicle for social growth and development in every individual. The foundation of education starts from the pre-primary to the secondary levels. So is the need to get it right at this basic level of education. The researchers observed an overwhelming rate of socially maladjusted students in our secondary schools who did not benefit from the gains of the basic level of education. This situation became worrisome and calls for urgent attention and intervention due to its adverse effects on the society in general.

The child at the secondary school is expected to have acquired some skills like mixing with other students' and adults as well as behaves in a respectful manner with others (Onyemerekeya and Okezie, 2017). They are expected to have learnt how to adjust to being part of a group by caring for themselves and working out disagreement and imbibing self regulating behaviours.

According to Gabriel and Lindsay (2022), Erikson's stages of psychosocial development stage five (5), falls within the school ages (12-15 years) of adolescence development classified as adolescence period (identity vs identity confusion). The dominant characteristics of this stage harmonizes ones role or duty coverage/confusion or/misplacement of priority. The students' bahaviours at this stage is to explore this independence and develop a sense of self.

They need to develop a sense of individualized identity that would lead them throughout the rest of their lives. This is because to succeed, one needs the ability to stay true to himself. Failure itself is an indication of "role confusion and a weak sense of self" (Kendra 2024). In some cases, the students' could begin to manifest signs and symptoms of social maladjustment. This tends to pose a lot of challenges on the students' academic development

as they tend to have a lower commitment to academic achievement giving rise to poor results, higher rate of truancy and increased risk of dropping out of school.

Social maladjustment is a psychological term that refers to a persistence pattern of violating societal norms such as multiple acts of societal truancy, substance or sex abuse, cult related activities. This is usually characterized by struggle with authority, low frustration threshold, impunity or manipulative behaviour. Social maladjustment does not go without some adverse effects which includes poor academic performance and possible school dropout.

Based on this premise, the researchers are motivated to ascertain whether subjecting such students to Assertive Behavioural Training could help reduce the rate of social maladjustment among them. Assertive Behaviour Training however, is an age-long technique developed by Wolpe (1958). It teaches an individual to express one's thoughts and feelings comfortably and with consideration for others. It helps the individual to alter one's reaction to stressful condition. According to Wesley and Malttain (2008 as cited in Okafor and Agbaenyi (2020)) the basic aim of Assertive Behaviour Training is raising an individual's self confidence so as to increase his level of self esteem and resilience.

Assertive Behaviour Training has been successfully employed by various scholars to achieve positive results over the years. In Onyeagusi (2015) study titled "efficacy of three therapies in the management of anger among in-school adolescents", the researchers found assertive training more effective than relaxation skill technique in the management of anger among adolescents. Similarly, Nwankwo (2016) employed Assertive Training in reducing cult related tendencies among pupils in the study titled "efficacy of cognitive restructuring, assertiveness and morality training in helping pupils withdraw from cultism" and found it effective.

Statement of Problem

Social maladjustment is a conduct behaviour disorder whose cause could be traced to such variables as the family, school or even to personal attributes. It has a lot of adverse effects on the scholastic performance of the victim. Many socially maladjusted students lack the necessary skills to express themselves assertively. Students faced with such challenges may find it very difficult to get adjusted in the society if not properly and professionally guided. The problem of the study becomes – could Assertive Behaviour Training alleviate or reduce the rate of social maladjustment found among secondary school students'?

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study is to ascertain the effect of Assertive Behaviour Training skills among the socially maladjusted students' in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. what are the socially maladjusted mean scores of students' exposed to Assertive Behaviour Training skills and control group at post test in Aba Education Zone?
2. what are the socially maladjusted mean scores of students' given Assertive Behaviour Training skills and control group at follow-up in Aba Education Zone?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant mean difference between the students' exposed to Assertive Behaviour Training skills and control group at post-test in Aba Education zone.
2. There is no significant socially maladjusted mean difference between the subjects given Assertive Behaviour Training skills and the control group at follow-up in Aba Education Zone.

Method

A quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study with a pretest, posttest and control group method. The choice of quasi-experiment was on the premise that the researchers could only exert partial control over subjects because they are human beings. The study took place in all the state owned secondary schools in Aba Education zone. The area was purposively chosen due to proximity to the researchers who reside in the said area. The population consisted of 21,709 students (SEMB, 2024). This comprises all the students in the secondary schools in the zone. The sample for the study comprises 24 students' who were purposively chosen for the study for the sake of convenience and proximity. In collecting data for the study, the researchers developed and validated instruments named "socially maladjusted checklist for students (SMC-S) and students' socially maladjusted checklist for teachers' nomination (SSMCTN)" were gainfully employed in carrying out the observation method on the students. The instrument consists of 20-items derived from literature as characteristics of social maladjustment among students'. The researchers made ticks against each observed trait. So also did the class teachers tick against every socially maladjusted trait observed in students'. These ticks on the students' checklists were eventually tallied. The scores from the

teacher's nominations and that of the researches observations were added and the average taken. The scores derived were statistically analyzed and the mean scores were gotten. Same instruments SMC-S and SSMCTN and same observation methods were employed at the posttest and follow-up sessions from which post-test means scores and follow-up mean scores were derived.

The reliability of both SMC-S and SSMCTN were established making use of test-retest reliability approach. The instruments were administered on 15 students from Umuahia Education zone. Same instrument was re-administered on the same group of respondents after two weeks interval. The score derived from the first and second tests were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method. This gave high reliability index of 0.76 respectively.

The treatment was carried out over a period of 15 weeks. Prior to the treatment period, the researcher got the class teachers acquainted with the intended treatment package as well as their role in the research. Then provided them with the students socially maladjustment checklist for teacher nomination (SSMCTN). The teachers' were trained on how to make use of the instrument to tick against observed traits in the checklist for each student. This was done for two weeks after which the researchers then used the socially maladjusted checklist for students and personally observed the students. The mean scores derived from computations of the ticks and tallies on the instruments; the 12 highest ranking students from each of the three (3) schools were selected for the study, giving rise to 24 participants for the study. At the end of 10 weeks therapeutic training using the social adjustment package on the 12 selected subjects were done and all the participants were once again subjected to a post-test session using same instruments and same method. Four (4) weeks after, a follow-up assessment was carried out on the subjects using same instrument and same method. The data collected for the study was analyzed using mean statistics to answer the research questions while the analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) took care of the hypotheses. Results obtained from the data were presented in the tables based on the research questions and hypotheses.

Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One:

What are the socially maladjusted mean scores of students' exposed to Assertive Behavior Training (ABT) and the control group at post-test in Aba Education Zones.

Table 1: Mean scores of students' exposed to ABT and the control group at post-test.

Treatment	Number of participants	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score
Assertive Behaviour Training	12	74.41	38.17
Control	12	75.25	73.33

The result showed that, the students' experimentally treated with Assertive Behaviour Training had a mean score of 38.17 while that of the control groups was 73.33. The result implied that at post-test, the students' given Assertive Behaviour Training has a reduced mean score while the control group remained high. Assertive Behaviour Training (ABT) is therefore effective in reducing the rate of social maladjustment among students' in Aba Education Zone.

Research Question Two: What are the socially maladjusted mean scores of students' exposed to ABT and control group at follow-up in Aba Education Zone?

Table 2: mean scores of students' treated with BAT and control group at follow-up.

Treatment	Number of participants	Pre-test mean score	Post-test mean score
Control	12	73.33	2.995
Follow-up	12	36.917	2.968

The result indicated that students' experimentally treated with Assertive Behaviour Training had a follow-up mean score of 36.917. On the other hand, the students under the control group had a follow-up mean score of 73.33. The result revealed that at follow test, the mean scores still reduced for the experimental team but was still high for the control group. Thus, the conclusion is that Assertive Behaviour Training is still effective in the treatment of social maladjustment among students' even after sex week interval in Aba Education Zone.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There are no significant socially maladjusted mean differences between the subjects exposed to ABT and the control group at post-test in Aba Education Zone.

Table 3: ANCOVA summary table of differences between mean scores of control group and treatment group at post-test.

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Df	mean squares	F. ratio	Significance	Decision
corrected model	7461.733	2	3720.866	605.448	.000	
Intercept	35.118	1	35.118	5.727	.026	
Pre-test	41.566	1	41.566	6.779	.017	
Between group	7324.127	1	7324.127	1194.455	.00	Significance
within groups (error)	128.767	21	6.132			
Total	82184.00	24				
Corrected Total	7590.500					

Table 3 shows that the f-ratio of the difference between groups at post-test is 1194.455 with significance probability of .000, which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. This shows that at the post-test, treatment effect is important at 5% level of significance $p(<0.05)$. This revealed significant differences between the adjusted mean scores on social maladjustment of students' exposed to ABT and the control group at post-test. The study thus rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis, that is the socially maladjusted mean scores of the assertive behaviours training group and the control group differs significantly.

H₀₂: there is no significance socially maladjusted mean difference between the students subjected to Assertive Behaviour Training and the control group at follow-up.

Table 4: ANCOVA summary table for ABT at follow-up

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	mean squares	f. ratio	Significance	Decision
Corrected model	8010.436	2	4005.218	591.533	.000	
Intercept	24.289	1	24.289	3.581	.072	
Post-test	53.394	1	53.394	7.886	.011	
Between groups (follow-up)	7847.181	1	7847.181	1158.956	.000	Significance
Error	142.189	21	6.771			
Total	81083.00	24				
Corrected Total	78152.625	24				

Data from table 4 reveals that the f-ratio of the effect of ABT on students at follow-up is 1158.956 at an alpha level of .000. Hence, this significant level is greater than the chosen level of 0.05. The decision therefore, is to reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternative that there is significance difference between the socially maladjusted mean scores of ABT group and the control group at follow-up assessment period.

Discussion

The study revealed that Assertive Behaviour Training was effective in reducing socially maladjustment among students' in Aba education Zone, Abia State. It was further established that there great differences between the mean scores of students' exposed to ABT and the control at group post-test. This implies that Assertive Behaviour Training could help in reducing the rate of social maladjustment among the students. This is in line with the findings of earlier researchers like Onyeaguzi (2015); Nwankwo (2016); Okafor and Agbaenyi (2020), Rahmanic and Osseino (2022); and Haji Heydari and Kiamaneski (2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Assertive Behaviour Training (ABT) is found to be effective in reducing social maladjustment among secondary school students'. Consequently, school counselors and teachers should confidently adopt ABT as the need arises in the management of issues that bother on behavioural conduct among students

Recommendations

The study recommended that:

- i. Assertive Behaviour Training module should be incorporated in the school curriculum for both the senior and junior secondary schools in Abia State.
- ii. Students that manifest behaviours suggestive of social maladjustment should immediately be referred to a school counsellor for professional assistance.
- iii. Assertive Behaviour Training could be given to students irrespective of their age and gender.

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