EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING COUNSELLING TECHNIQUE ON REDUCTION OF BULLYING BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

**Basiru Umar Aliero[1], Ibrahim Muhammad Sani Mainagge[2],
*Shehu Yahaya Tsagem[3]**

[1]Department of Education , KSUST, Aliero, Nigeria;
[2]Directorate of Learner Support Services, NOUN Kebbi Study Centre, Nigeria;
[3]Department of Educational Foundations, UDU Sokoto, Nigeria

Email: [1]basiruumar73@gmail.com; [2]msanimainagge@noun.edu.ng
[1]Corresponding Author: shehu.yahaya@udusok.edu.ng
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5255-8079

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Bullying as a relational behavior where younger and less stronger ones experience malicious intention from some bigger or stronger ones has been noticed among students. The latter were found to show the intent to harm others because of some reasons among which are life experiences that shapes their behavior.

Purpose: Examined the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique in reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis, Nigeria.

Methodology: The study used a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test experimental and control group design. The study population comprises of 71 bully students and a sample of 40 students, assigned to the experimental and control groups, respectively. Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (BBQ) was the instrument used for data collection. Validities of face and content for the instrument were established and also a reliability index of 0.88 was achieved through the test-retest technique. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics frequency and simple percentage in answering the research question while t-test for independent sample was used in testing the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results: It was revealed that there is a significant difference in the effect of the cognitive restructuring Counselling technique on reduction of bullying behavior between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group (t = -10.544, p = .000). However, there was no significant gender difference in the effect of the cognitive restructuring counselling technique on bullying behavior (t = .095, p = .926).

Recommendations: Teachers, counsellors, and all stakeholders in education should use the cognitive restructuring Counselling technique to treat bullying behavior of students.

Cite paper as:
Aliero, B. U., Mainagge, I.M.S., Tsagem, S.Y. (2023). Effect of cognitive restructuring Counselling technique on reduction of bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational Research in Developing Areas, 4* (1), 50 - 64. https://doi.org/10.47434/JEREDA.4.1.2023.50.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study is of importance to teachers, counsellors, students, parents and other stakeholders in education. It is important to them that it would help identify bullies, suggest the best ways to help them, and specifically empowers counsellors to use the cognitive restructuring counselling technique to ameliorate the behavior deficit.

INTRODUCTION

The development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education attained by its citizens. It is believed that the basis of any true development must begin with the development of human resources. The importance which Nigeria, like most other developing countries attributed to education as a major developmental tool can be seen in the priority given to human resource development in her policy statement and development plans. Building a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, and a place of bright and full opportunities for all citizens are among the goals of the development plans (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). These days, there has been an excessive rise in the prevalence of student participation in maladaptive behaviors. Most of such misconduct manifestations are more noticeable among secondary school students in such a way that is upsetting and troublesome. Thus, Tsagem (2021) observes that reasons as to why students' exhibit tendencies for violence have received attentions from researchers in recent times and it is quite interesting to note the numerous factors that may, singly or in combination, result in such behavior. One of such maladaptive behaviors is bullying.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that is carried out intentionally and repeatedly to harm another party who is physically or psychologically less powerful (Olweus, 2010). Bullying can be defined as a prolonged mistreatment by a person who harbors malicious intentions and who is perceived to be more powerful than the victim of abuse (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Rigby (2017) emphasized that bullying "is the repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of people. Bullying is a subset of aggressive conduct defined by three criteria: hostile purpose, power imbalance, and repeated action over time (Burger, Strohmeier, Spröber, Bauman & Rigby, 2015). Bullying is the act of repeatedly engaging in hostile behavior with the intention of injuring another person physically, mentally, or emotionally. Over time, the conduct is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated. Bullying can range from one-on-one bullying to mobbing in which the bully has one or more "lieutenants" who are eager to assist the principal bully in their bullying activities. Peer abuse is a term used to describe bullying in schools and at work (Bennett, 2006). It involves things like issuing threats, spreading rumors, physically or verbally assaulting someone, and purposefully excluding someone from a group. Therefore, School bullying can be physical, verbal or emotional and is usually repeated over a period of time.

The corpus of literature has classified bullying into various categories. Non-verbal, verbal, and physical behavior are examples of this. Individual and collective bullying are two types of bullying that are classified according to perpetrators or participants. Other interpretations include emotional and relationship bullying, as well as physical injury to another person or property (McGrath, 2007). Individual bullying tactics are used against a single target or targets by a single person. Bullying that causes bodily harm or property damage is referred to as physical bullying. Physical bullying includes stealing, shoving, beating, fighting, and ruining someone's possessions on purpose. Verbal bullying refers to any form of bullying that is carried out solely through the use of speech and does not involve physical contact. It is one of the most common forms of bullying, it involves calling someone a derogatory name or nicknaming, threatening, yelling at or speaking to someone in a nasty or unkind

tone of voice, especially without cause, making fun of someone's voice or speaking style, laughing at someone and making insults or otherwise making fun on others.

Even in everyday life, human beings have a striking propensity to be supportive to others, to offer comfort and help, to shape their behavior for the good of the community. But at least some members of the species also display the opposite tendency: a propensity for social disorder, violence, vandalism, and theft (Tsagem, 2013). Bullying behavior is a worldwide phenomenon as the culture of bullying emerge in any setting where people interact with one another. This can encompass school, family, work, home, and neighborhoods (Williams, 2011). The prevalence of bullying in schools is the most alarming. Foreign and local reports indicate cases of school crimes caused by the occurrence of bullying within the school environment (Rastrullo & Francisco, 2015). Craig, Harel-Fish, Fogel-Grinvald, Dostaler, Hetl and Simons-Morton (2009) found out that a survey of 35 countries indicate an average incidence rates of 11percent for both victims and bullies. There were about 2.7 million students being bullied each year by students taking on the role of the bully. According to WHO report, one (1) out of seven (7) students in kindergarten through 12th grade have participated in the bullying incidents either as a bully or as a victim (Ahmad, 2019). The case with Nigerian schools may not be different if appropriate statistics is taken. These figures can be higher in percentage depending on how one defines the problem and its prevalence. It is difficult to find a secondary school today where bullying does not exist among students (Sa'ad, 2016).

Bullying can cause a lot of physical and or psychological damage to students in their learning environments. Students who are bullied as well as those who bully others may face serious and long-term consequences. It infringes on the child's right to freedom, security and privacy. The issue of peer victimization while in school normally will generate high level of social aggression which may persist into adulthood in the form of criminality, marital violence, child abuse and sexual harassment. When these happen, the negative impacts extend beyond the victims of peer victimization to their family members, the community and the entire nation. The high level of peer victimization is probably one of the early signs of anti-social behavior that eventually culminates in youth violence. Previous researchers have observed that there is a clear difference in bullying among males and females. Commonly, boys bully other boys and girls, whereas girls are bullied mainly by other girls (Sampson, 2002). When girls are bullies, they tend to use more indirect forms of bullying. Boys tend to use physical and verbal threats. Girls use social and verbal threat, such as spreading rumors about one another and excluding one from the peer group (Hazler & Oliver, 2007). School types played a role in type of bullying and its degree, it is common for bullies to prey on their victims in boarding schools than in day schools, and it is more common for bullying to occur in public school than in private schools (Blake & Aluede, 2005).

The issue of bullying attracted the interest of public discussion, as well as educational researchers. School administrators and teachers made many attempts to curb the threat of bullying in our schools, but mostly through the use of corporal punishment by prescribing a certain amount of cane to any student who bullies others. Thus, the situation goes from bad to worse as it leads the former to revenge on the latter. Bullying is a bad behavior and bad behavior can be changed or modified as it was founded in behaviorist argument that, human and animal behaviors are modifiable. But unfortunately many school administrators and teachers failed to recognise the fact that bullying is one of the behavior problems that needs the intervention of behavior modification plans rather than attributing the problem to lack of proper home training from parents, as such employing aversive technique of corporal punishment for many years, and the problem has not been well addressed despite the danger it has on the individual wellbeing and the society at large. Bearing

these in mind, it can be seen that there is a strong need to find active means through which the problem of bullying among students can be reduced if not totally eradicated.

To find a better solution to the problem, contemporary counsellors recognized the fact that bullies need extra help from behavior modification plans to meet school expectations of health relationship among students. Therefore, they used interventions from behavior modification plans that are effective and designed for positive behavior change and investigated their effect on bullying. Along this line, many studies were conducted using different behavior modification techniques. Ahmad (2019) investigated the effect of Negative Reinforcement Counselling Technique on Bullying among students in Kano State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives. The Quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 157 JSS2 students that exhibited symptoms of physical bullying and have met the criteria for the selection from the two purposely selected junior secondary schools. Of these 157 students, 40 students (22 male and 18 female) were randomly selected as the sample of the study. All selected students were pre-tested at the beginning of the study, a six-week intervention programme on negative reinforcement was administered to them all, after which the post-test was administered to them. The instruments used for data collection in the study were a self-developed checklist on symptoms of bullying behavior tagged 'Bullying Behavior Checklist' (BBC). The result obtained from the study was analyzed using the t-test for independent and dependent samples. The study findings reveal that the negative reinforcement counselling technique has an effect in reducing bullying behavior regardless of gender. In another vein, the findings of Tsagem (2020) led to the conclusion that rational emotive therapy was effective in reducing the proneness of students to violent behavior; and although there was an observed difference between male and female students exposed to rational emotive therapy in their proneness to violent behavior, both genders benefitted equally.

Radliff, Wang and Swearer (2015) in a sample of 469 middle school students, they looked at cognitive and psychosocial aspects in bullying perpetration and peer victimization. A hopelessness mediator hypothesis was also studied. Compared to peers who were not bullied, students who were bullied reported having a stronger external locus of control. Victims of bullying endorsed the highest externality. The victim group's relationship between verbal/relational victimization and external locus of control was entirely mediated by hopelessness, but not the bully-victim groups. The study of Ugwu and Olatunbosun (2016) investigated the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in reducing bullying behavior among secondary students in River State, Nigeria. The research design used for the study was quasi-experimental design. The experimental group received six (6) weeks of cognitive behavior therapy, while the control group received no treatment. The findings from the study revealed that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has impact in reducing bullying among secondary school students, as measured by pre- and post-test mean scores. Furthermore, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) had a considerable impact on the bullying behavior of the experimental group.

Sa'ad (2016) investigated the effect of modelling and positive reinforcement techniques on bullying behavior among senior secondary school students in Bichi Education Zone, Kano State. Three research objectives with three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. A quasi-experimental design pre-test and post-test was adopted for the study. The study population consisted of all SS1 students from some selected secondary schools in Bichi Education Zone, Kano State, who exhibited symptoms of bullying and had met the selection criteria. The sample of sixty students was used and divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group received six (6) weeks of modelling and positive reinforcement techniques, while the control group

received no treatment. The data was collected using researcher's developed questionnaire. The collected was analyzed using t-test for independent sampling in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that modelling and positive reinforcement techniques have a significant effect in reducing bullying among secondary school students without significant gender and school type differences. Interestingly, Tsagem (2014) concluded that the REBT intervention is more effective than the CBT intervention in rehabilitating violent behavior among students. Also, there were significant differences in remediating violent behavior among male and female students exposed to REBT intervention and those exposed to CBT intervention in Katsina state.

The findings of these studies revealed that these behavior modification techniques were effective in reducing the threat of bullying. However, considering how these behavior modification techniques were found to be effective in managing bullying, students with behavioral problems such as bullying must be treated using psychosocial behavior modification techniques. Among the available behavior modification techniques that can be used to tackle the threat of bullying is the Cognitive Restructuring Counselling Technique (CRCT).

The cognitive restructuring technique aims to teach a client how to better evaluate stimuli to reduce unpleasant emotional reactions. The main challenge for a cognitive restructuring therapist is to change the client's erroneous vision of the world. The type of the mental set that a person brings to his experience determines an appropriate perception of life's reality (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachukwu, 2012). This Counselling technique focuses on improving personal and interpersonal functioning throughout a person's life (Martin and Pear 2007). Emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental, and organizational concerns are all addressed in this discipline. Cognitive restructuring therapy is a collection of culturally appropriate strategies that help people improve their well-being, reduce distress and adjustment, resolve crises, and improve their capacity to function better in their daily life. The specialization provides a unique perspective in the broader practice-based domains of psychology by focusing on both normal developmental concerns and problems associated with physical, emotional, and mental disorders (Idowu, 2009). Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the effect of the cognitive restructuring counselling technique on reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Bullying among students is considered as one of the problem in secondary schools mainly because of its impact on the bully and the victim as well. Bullying is rampant in our secondary schools in Nigeria and has a lot of effect on the students. In most public senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis, bullying behavior have manifested in various forms such physical, verbal and emotional. These behavioral problems have a negative multiplier effect on both the individual and society because they do not enhance the maintenance and actualization of potentials of the individual. Bullying led many victims to develop the attitude of school phobia which, in many cases, leads to school dropout, absenteeism, poor academic performance and achievement. The tendency of gang involvement in bullying, as in the case of group bullying, makes the perpetrators to easily involve in different criminal activities later in life. Thus, makes bullying to be a frequent social concern.

These negative behaviors, if unchecked, can truncate the achievement of the stated educational goals and will be detrimental to the educational achievement of both bullies and victims. School administrators and teachers tried many times to curb the threat of bullying in secondary schools, but mostly through the use of corporal punishment by prescribing a certain amount of cane to any student who bullies others. Thus, the situation goes from bad to worse as it

leads the former to revenge on the latter. It is recognized that if the student's behavior is unpleasant, it needs a corrective measure through the use of a behavior modification technique such as cognitive restructuring.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To find the prevalence of bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
2. To find the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique in reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis.
3. To find gender differences in the effect of cognitive restructuring Counselling technique in reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in the Sokoto metropolis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the prevalence of Bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto metropolis?

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significance difference in pre-test and post-test mean scores of bullying behavior between the students exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in control group among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.
2. There is no significance gender difference in post-test mean scores of bullying behavior of the students exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique among secondary school students in Sokoto State.

METHODOLOGY
Design

The research design adopted for this study is quasi-experimental in the form of pretest-posttest experimental and control group design. The quasi experimental design aims to establish a cause and effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable (Thomas, 2021). The quasi-experimental design was adopted because the aim of this study is to manipulate the independent variable (cognitive restructuring counselling technique) and see how it affects the dependent variable (bullying behavior). The design also allows for the examination of the results received from the pre-test and post-test in order to assess the treatment's effectiveness when compared to the control group (Gay, 2009).

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises of all SSII students of two purposely selected schools selected Government Secondary School Arkilla (GSS Arkilla, Girls) and Tafida Aminu Secondary School, Mabera (TASS Mabera, Boys). According to the first term class attendance register 2021/2022 academic session, the two schools have a total of 374 SS II students out of which 71 students (40 from GSS Arkilla and 31 from TASS, Mabera) were identified with symptoms of bullying behavior and have met the criteria for selection. Therefore, the target population for the study is 71 SSII students who exhibit the symptoms of bullying behavior with an average age of 15-17 years.

Purposive sampling was used to select two (2) public secondary schools in the Sokoto metropolis, and SS2 students from each school were also purposively selected for this study. In purposive sampling technique, sample is chosen purposely due to the strong evidence that it is a representative of the entire population based on personal experience (Koul, 2012). Out of 71 identified bullying students forty (40) were randomly selected as the sample for the study, twenty (20) from each school. The sample in each school were also divided into two groups 10 in experimental and another 10 in control group. Therefore, the study sample size comprises forty (40) students identified with the symptoms of bullying behavior. The choice of forty (40) as a sample size was influenced by the fact that the research design was experimental, as Gay (2009) suggests that for experimental research, a minimum of thirty (30) respondents is sufficient.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data collection instruments used in the study was adopted from Ahmad (2019) tagged as "Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (BBQ)". BBQ was used in measuring the level of students' bullying behaviors during pretest and post-test condition. The questionnaire was designed in the form where items can best be put in sentences and requesting the respondents to check and put tick in the space provided under appropriate word with corresponding numerical value that best described their element of bullying behavior within the period under consideration.

The Bullying Behavior Questionnaire (BBQ) contains two sections. Section 'A' deals with demographic data of the participants. Section 'B' contains fourteen (14) items that measure the level of bullying behavior. The scale was a four points Likert scale, ranging from 0 (Never), 1 (Sometimes), 2 (Often) and 3 (Always) with highest bullying behavior scores indicate the greater bullying related behavior.

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by three experts in the field of guidance and Counselling, two from Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and one from Department of Educational Foundations, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto. They all determined the items' suitability and relevance in relation to the research objectives as well as the instrument's sufficiency in measuring what it was designed to measure.

The instrument has a coefficient reliability index of 0.83 from its original author, Ahmad (2019). However, to further establish the reliability index of the instrument, a test re-test procedure was used. The instrument was distributed to the sample of twenty (20) SS 2 students of one secondary school in the study area which is not among the sampled schools, at two different occasions (Interval of two weeks). The correlation co-efficient of the two scores received from the two tests was computed using Person Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The result revealed the reliability index of 0.88. Therefore, the instrument was statistically determined to be reliable and appropriate for the study based on this coefficient value.

Procedure for Data Collection

Based on the total number of students 374 copies of the questionnaire was produce and administered to all SS II students of two schools. The students were asked to read and comprehend the Questionnaire and also to choose the single response that best described their behaviors in the previous term. The completed questionnaires were collected, scored and analyzed by the researchers. The result was used to identify bullies among students, and of the 374 students, 71 were identified as having symptoms of bullying behavior. To answer the research question and test the null hypotheses of the study, the scores of each student were used to obtain the mean score and standard deviation during the pre-test and post-test phases.

Treatment Procedure

The treatment for the experimental group was carried out in three phase. Pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment phase.

Pre-treatment phase

The pretreatment phase refers to the intervention step at which the researcher obtains baseline information about the level of bullying behavior of the participants. The experimental and control groups were exposed to a pre-testing condition. For each group a scheduled was made for the administration of pre-test that was done at their normal classroom settings. During the session, the consent of the respondents to participate in the research work was sought, all randomly selected students agreed to participate in the programme. A copy of BBQ was given to each student and they were asked to select one single response for each item that best described the frequency of specific bullying behavior displayed by them over the last term. The completed questionnaire was collected on the sport, scored, recorded and analyzed by the

researchers. The scores obtained were kept as pre-test scores for future reference and analysis along with the post-test scores at the end of the study.

Treatment Phase

The treatment session involved basically the provision of counselling interventions using cognitive restructuring counselling on for experimental group at their normal classroom settings. While the control group continue with their normal classroom instruction without using any counselling intervention. Treatment sessions were carried out for a period of six (6) weeks within the period of 25-30 minutes on Mondays and Wednesdays for the experimental group of GDSS, Arkilla and Tafida Aminu Secondary School, Mabera, respectively were selected.

Post-treatment Phase

During the post-treatment phase all the two groups (experimental and control) were post-tested by administering the same BBQ to the respondents. The BBQ were given to the students and they were requested to select one single response for each item that best described the frequency of specific behavior displayed by them in that

term which include the six (6) weeks of the treatment and six weeks after the treatment. The completed BBQ were scored, recorded and analyzed by the researcher. Result of the pre-test (before treatment) and that of the post-test (after treatment) were compared for differences.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics frequency and simple percentage in answering the research question while t-test for independent sample was used in testing the two null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The use of t-test is considered appropriate because it is a statistical package used to determine the significance differences between two groups (Gay, 2009). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used for the analysis.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the Prevalence of Bullying Behavior among Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis?

Table 1: Prevalence of Bullying among SSII Students

Schools	SS II Students	Bullying	Percentage
GDSS Mebara	196	31	15.8%
GDSS Arkilla	178	40	22.8%
Total	**374**	**71**	**19%**

Table 1 above revealed that out of 374 SS II students in selected schools, 71 (19%) were identified as having symptoms of bullying behavior. This indicates that the prevalence of bullying behavior in the study area is 19%.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the effect of the cognitive restructuring Counselling technique on reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Table 2: Independent Samples T-test of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of Bullying Behavior between Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Df	t-cal	P-value (2 tailed)
Pre-test	Experimental	20	36.35	3.514	.786	19	1.497	.151
	Control	20	33.65	6.352	1.420			
Post-test	Experimental	20	16.85	2.300	.514	19	-	.000
	Control	20	32.65	6.368	1.424		10.544	

❖ Sig. at $P \leq 0.05$

Table 2 above presents the pre-test and post-test mean scores and standard deviation of bullying behavior of students exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique and those in control group. The result indicated that the pretest calculated a t-value of 1.497 and a p-value of .151, tested at a level of 0.05 with degree of freedom 19. From the result, the p-value of .151is greater than a level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no significant difference in bullying mean scores between the experimental and control group at the pre-test level. However, the result also shows that the post-test calculated t-value of -10.544 and p-value of .000, tested at a level of 0.05 with degree of freedom 19. From the result the p-value of .000 is less than a level of 0.05. Thus the null hypothesis which states that there is no significance differences in pre-test and post-test mean scores of bullying behavior between the students exposed to cognitive restructuring and those in control group among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis, is therefore rejected.

This means that significant difference was observed in post-test mean scores of experimental and control group in favor of the experimental group. Thus, indicate the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique in reducing bullying behavior.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significance gender differences in effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique on bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis, Sokoto State

Table 3: Independent Samples T-test of Post-test Mean Scores of Bullying Behavior between Male and Female Students in Experimental Group

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Df	t-cal	P-value (2 tailed)
Male	10	16.90	2.923	.924			
					18	.095	.926
Female	10	16.80	1.619	.512			

❖ Not Sig. at $P \geq 0.05$

Table 3 indicates the post-test results of bullying behavior between male and female students exposed to the cognitive restructuring counselling technique. The finding shows the calculated t-value of 0.95 and p-value of .926 tested at a level of 0.05 with degree of freedom 18. From the finding, the p-value of .926 is greater than a level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significance gender differences in post-test mean

scores of bullying behavior of students exposed to cognitive restructuring counselling technique among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis is retained. This indicate that cognitive restructuring counselling technique has similar effect in reducing bullying behavior of both male and female students, hence the technique is not gender sensitive.

DISCUSSIONS

The result obtained indicated that cognitive restructuring counselling technique is effective in reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis. This was obvious in the post-test result of bullying behavior, where there was a substantial reduction in mean scores between the experimental and control groups in favor of the experimental group. The reduction is then attributed to the effect of the cognitive restructuring Counselling strategy on the bullying behavior of the experimental group respondents. The finding is in line with that of Anthonia, Obikeze and Ifeoma (2022) when they found that cognitive restructuring technique was effective in reducing bullying behaviors of secondary school students. Likewise, findings by Dungurawa and Ibrahim (2021) revealed that cognitive restructuring counselling technique is effective in reducing bullying behavior among students in municipal zonal education directorate, Kano State, Nigeria. The result is also in support of the recommendation by Chinyelu, Ada and Okwuaku (2020) that contingency contracting and cognitive restructuring techniques should be adopted by school counsellors and other allied professionals as a means of reducing bullying behavior in our school setting. It also further supports the conclusion by Sa'adah, Wibowo and Sunawan (2021) that Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) counselling is effective in reducing bullying behavior in students and that school counsellors can implement individual counselling with a Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach to reduce bullying behavior. This finding further supports Muslim, Neviyarni & Karneli, Y. (2019), where they pointed that

Counselling through cognitive behavioral therapy is highly effective in increasing students' understanding of bullying. Similarly, the findings are in agreement with those of Usman (2019) who found a significant effect of the cognitive restructuring Counselling technique on physical bullying behavior among secondary school students. The finding also sustained the finding of Ugwu and Olatunbosun (2016), which reveals that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) had a significant effect in reducing bullying among students. It is also comparable with Ayodele, Elizabeth and Bose (2014) findings that revealed a significant effect of cognitive self-instruction, contingency management and control on bullying behavior.

However, in addition to the cognitive restructuring counselling technique, other behavior modification techniques were found to be effective in reducing bullying behavior among students, as indicated in the study of Amelia and Lesmana (2022), which concluded that the application of the cognitive behavior therapy approach in group guidance can have an influence on the decline in bullying behavior of students. Likewise, Ahmad (2019) who stated that Negative Reinforcement Counselling technique has effect in reducing physical bullying behavior. Similarly, Abdulkader (2017) confirmed the effectiveness of the cognitive behavioral therapy programme to reduce bullying among adolescents with learning disabilities. Also, the study of Sa'ad (2016) investigated the effect of modelling and positive reinforcement techniques on bullying behavior among senior secondary school students in Bichi Education Zone, Kano State. The findings of the study revealed that modelling and positive reinforcement techniques have a significant effect in reducing bullying among secondary school students. Likewise, Alabi and Lami (2015) found that both Client-Centred Therapy (CCT) and Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) produced significant reduction in bullying behavior among the in-school adolescents. Thus, it was well the reason why Uzoamaka, Maxwell and Kennedy

(2021) recommended that Counsellors should be taught the practical aspects of REBT in their training programmes and not just the theoretical aspects.

The finding also revealed that there is no significance gender differences in the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique in reducing bullying behavior among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis. This finding is in support with what Anthonia, Obikeze and Ifeoma (2022) indicated that the difference in the effectiveness of the Cognitive Restructuring technique on bullying behaviors of male and female secondary school students was not significant. The finding is also in support of Sa'adah, Wibowo and Sunawan (2021) that Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) counselling is effective in reducing bullying behavior in students. Similarly, the findings are in agreement with those of Usman (2019) who found a significant effect of the cognitive restructuring Counselling technique on physical bullying behavior among secondary school students. This is in line with the finding of Ugwu and Olatunbosun (2016), Ahmad (2019) and Sa'ad (2016) whose findings revealed no significance gender difference in the effect of cognitive restructuring, negative reinforcement, modelling and positive reinforcement counselling techniques on bullying behavior among secondary schools' students. The findings also pointed to Ayodele, Elizabeth and Bose (2014) results that gender did not affect the effectiveness of contingency management and cognitive self-instruction on bullying behavior of secondary students in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed something that is being under-played by the major actors in the development of the individual; parents and teachers. This area of study is well known in trying to down play psychological issues that threatens the relational existence of its people to the extent of shying away from discussing such issues and sometimes by outright denials. Because the study brought out to light the level of bullying among the students, relevant stakeholders should no longer shy away from the issue and the study has even made effort to provide ways to solve the issue by means of suggestions and recommendations.

In addition, the study has also established that cognitive restructuring is an important technique to reduce bullying among students. This is of importance to counsellors in the area of study in particular and elsewhere in general to employ the technique in helping in similar situations and also in helping individuals with such tendencies overcome such challenges in order to lead a more satisfying peaceful life.

The study has very importantly revealed that bullying as a psychological relational issue affects both genders. Over time it has been erroneously considered that bullying is only synonymous with males, but now the study has succeeded in establishing the fact that the phenomenon could be devastating to both genders as victims and as perpetrators, respectively. And since the study has revealed that cognitive restructuring counselling technique has similar effect in reducing bullying behavior of both male and female students, then we could comfortably conclude that the technique is not gender sensitive. Thus, the technique could be employed to solve such issues for both males and females, expecting no discrepancy in the desired results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the prevalence of bullying in the study area is 19%, it was recommended that counsellors and teachers put more effort to reduce bullying among students in the study area by identifying early signs of bullying among students and checking it accordingly.
2. Based on the second finding of this study, it was recommended that teachers, counsellors and all stakeholders in education should utilize cognitive restructuring counselling technique in the treatment of students with bullying behavior.

3. Since there is no gender difference in the effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique in the treatment of bullying, it was recommended that the technique should be used in the treatment of both male and female students that exhibits and element of bullying behavior.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Disclaimer Statement

This work is part of a dissertation submitted for the award of a Master degree in Educational Guidance and Counselling. The title of the dissertation was *Effect of Cognitive Restructuring Counselling Technique in Reducing Maladaptive Behaviors among Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis* submitted to the Department of Educational Foundations, National Open University of Nigeria (Kebbi Study Centre) which was supervised by Dr. Basiru Umar Aliero. In the dissertation maladaptive behaviors were operationally defined to mean Bullying and Truancy as such the amount of work in the dissertation includes all parts related to bullying in the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, hypotheses, a review of the literature, a methodology, results, conclusions and recommendations.

Notes on Authors

Dr. Basiru Umar Aliero is a lecturer in Guidance and Counselling, Department of Education Foundation, Kebbi State University of Science and Technology Aliero, Nigeria. He holds a Grade II Teacher Certificate from Sultan Abubakar College Sokoto, a National Certificate in Education from Shehu Shagari College of Education Sokoto, and a Bachelor of Arts Education Degree (Islamic Studies) from Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. He also holds a Master Degree from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and a PhD in Guidance and Counselling from Bahri University, Sudan. He is a member of Counselling Association of Nigeria and the Nigeria Society for Educational Psychologists.

Mr. Ibrahim Muhammad Sani Mainagge is a Senior Counsellor at the Directorate of Learner Support Services, National Open University of Nigeria, Kebbi Study Centre, Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State-Nigeria. This author holds Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in History and Islamic Studies from Federal College of Education Kano and also a Bachelor of Arts Education and Islamic Studies (B. A. Ed. Islamic Studies) and Master Degree in Educational Guidance and Counselling all from Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. He is currently a PhD candidate in Guidance and Counselling from Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. He is a member of Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON).

Dr. Shehu Yahaya Tsagem is a Senior Lecturer in Guidance and Counselling, Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto, Nigeria. He holds Teachers Grade II Certificate from Teachers' College Daura and National Certificate in Education from Isah Kaita College of Education Dutsin-Ma. He also holds a Bachelor of Science Education Degree (Geography), Master Degree and PhD in Guidance and Counselling all from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Nigeria. He is a member of Counselling Association of Nigeria, Nigeria Society for Educational Psychologists and Research and Development Network (International Research Development Institute).

Authorship and Level of Contribution
Dr. Basiru Umar Aliero conceptualised the study and was also involved in all the stages of the investigation. He also supervised the work and in writing the original draft.

Mr. Ibrahim Muhammad Sani Mainagge contributed to the methodology and got involved in the general investigations of the work.

Dr. Shehu Yahaya Tsagem was involved in the formal analysis of the work and contributed to the methodology. He was also involved in data curation and in review and editing.

References

Abdulkader, W. F. A. (2017). The effectiveness of a cognitive behavioral therapy program in reducing school bullying among a sample of adolescents with learning disabilities. *International Journal of Education Science, 18* (1-3), 16 – 28. https://doi.org/10.31901/24566322.2017/18.1-3.02.

Ahmad, A. S. (2019). *Effect of negative reinforcement counselling technique on bullying behavior among junior secondary school students in Nasarawa Education Zone, Kano State, Nigeria.* Unpublished Masters Dissertation Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, Bayero University, Kano.

Alabi, Y. L., & Lami, M. M. (2015). Efficacy of client-centred and rational-emotive behavior therapies in reducing bullying behavior among in-school adolescents in Ilorin, Nigeria. *International Journal of Instruction, 8* (1), 62 – 74.

Amelia, F., & Lesmana, G. (2022). Contribution analysis of cognitive behavior therapy approach in group guidance to student bullying behavior. *Indonesian Journal Education*, *1* (2), 45 – 48. https://doi.org/10.30596/jcositte.v1i1.xxxx

Anthonia, E. C., Obikeze, N. J., & Ifeoma, O. (2022). Effect of cognitive restructuring technique on bullying behavior of secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. *European Journal of Education Studies*, *9* (1), 332 – 346. https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v9i1.4137.

Ayodele, O. A., Elizabeth, N. O., & Bose, O. M. (2014). The interactive effect of gender on the effectiveness of contingency management and cognitive self instruction on bullying behavior of secondary students in Nigeria. *Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Science*, *2* (2), 125-136.

Bennett, E. (2013). *peer abuse know more!: bullying from a psychological perspective*. Infinity Publishing.

Blake, E., & Aluede, O. (2005). Bullying in schools: International variations. *Journal of Social Sciences (Special Edition)*, *8,* 51-58.

Burger, C., Strohmeier, D., Spröber, N., Bauman, S., & Rigby, K. (2015). How teachers respond to school bullying: An examination of self-reported intervention strategy use, moderator effects, and concurrent use of multiple strategies. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 51,* 191–202.

Chinyelu, N., Ada, A., & Okwuaku, N. H. (2020). relative effectiveness of cognitive restructuring and contingency contracting techniques on bullying behavior among secondary school students in Imo State. *Journal of Guidance and Counselling Studies*, *4* (2), 114 – 124.

Craig, W., Harel-Fish, Y., Fogel-Grinvald, H., Dostaler, S., Hetland, J. & Simons-Morton (2009). A cross-national profile of bullying and victimization among adolescents in 40 countries. *International Journal of Public Health*, *54*, 216–224.

Dungurawa, B. D., & Ibrahim, S. A. (2021). Effect of cognitive restructuring counselling technique on bullying behavior among senior secondary school students in municipal zonal education directorate, Kano State, Nigeria. *Benin Journal of Social Work and Community Development*, *2,* 33-42.

Essuman, Y. K., Nwaogu, O. P., & Nwachukwu, V.C. (2012). *Principles*

and techniques of behavior modification. International University Press.

Federal Mistry of Education (2013). *National Policy on Education* 6th Edition. NERDC Press.

Gay, L. R. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications (9th Ed).* Pearson Education.

Hazler, B., & Oliver, D. (2007). Bulling & the child who stammers. *British Journal Educational Psychology, 61,* 355-372.

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2009). *Bullying beyond the schoolyard: Preventing and responding to cyberbullying.* Sage Publications.

Koul, L. R. (2012). *Methodology of educational research (4thed).* Vikas Publishing House PVT Ltd.

Martin, G., & Pear, E. (2007). *Behavior modification: What it is and how to do it* (Eighth Ed). Pearson Prentice Hall.

McGrath, M. J. (2007). *School bullying: Tools for avoiding harm and liability.* Corwin Press.

Muslim, M., Neviyarni, N., & Karneli, Y. (2019). Effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy in improving students' understanding of bullying. *Journal of Educational and Learning Studies*, *2* (2), 94 – 100. https://doi.org/10.32698/0732.

Olweus, D. (2010). *Bully and victims problems among children.* Erlbaum.

Radliff, K. M., Wang, C., & Swearer, S. M. (2015). Bullying and peer victimization: An examination of cognitive and psychosocial constructs. *Educational Psychology Papers and Publications*, *176*, 1 – 23

Rastrullo, K.E.A., & Francisco, M. E. (Sept, 2015). *Bullying and school connectedness among high school students.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/294885844_Bullying_and_School_Connectedness_Among_High_School_Students.

Rigby, K. (2017). Defining bullying: A new look at an old concept. *http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying.*

Sa'ad, S. M. (2016). *Effect of modelling and positive reinforcement techniques on bullying behavior among senior secondary school students in Bichi education zone, Kano State*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation Submitted to the School of Postgraduate Studies, Bayero University, Kano.

Sa'adah S., Wibowo, M. E., & Sunawan, S. (2021). The effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy Counselling to reduce bullying behavior. *Journal Bimbingan Konseling*, *10* (2), 112-122.

Sampson, B. (2002). *Restorative justice & school violence: Problem oriented guide*. Yale University Press.

Thomas, L. (2021). Quasi experimental design definition, types and example. www.scribbr.com.

Tsagem, S. Y., & Batagarawa, M. N. (2014). Effectiveness of rational emotive behavior therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy remediating violent secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria. *University of Bakht Alruda Scientific Journal*, *12,* 342 – 360.

Tsagem, S. Y. (2013). Effectiveness of rational emotive behavior therapy in reducing aggression among secondary school students in katsina zonal directorate of education. *Sokoto International Journal of Counselling Psychology*, *Maiden Edition,* 44 – 55.

Tsagem, S. Y. (2020). Efficacy of rational emotive therapy in remediating proneness to violent behavior among secondary school students in Katsina State. *Prestige Journal of Education, 3*(2), 1 – 12*.*

Tsagem, S. Y. (2021). School-based violent behaviors among secondary school students in Katsina State, Nigeria: Causes and origins. *Katsina Counsellors, Journal of Counselling*, *3*(1), 143 – 153.

Ugwu, C. J., & Olatunbosun, I. (2016). Effect of cognitive behavior therapy on reducing bullying on secondary school students in Ikwerre local government area, Rivers state, Nigeria. *The Counsellor, 35,* (1 & 2), 174-183.

Usman, A. (2019). *Effects of rational self analysis and cognitive restructuring counselling techniques on bullying behavior among secondary school students in Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria*. A Thesis Submitted to the Dept of Education, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. Nigeria.

Uzoamaka, C. P., Maxwell, E. D., & Kennedy, M. G. (2021). Effects of rational emotive behavior therapy on bullying behavior among senior public secondary school students in Rivers State. *International Journal of Education and Information Research*, *7* (3), 49 – 64.

Williams, R. (2011). The silent epidemic: Workplace bullying. *Psychology Today*, *11*(1), 11-23.