EFFECTIVENESS OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY IN REDUCING AGGRESSION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KATSINA ZONAL DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract
The study is a quasi-experiment on the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) in reducing aggression among senior secondary school students in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education. The research design employed was the pre-test post test two-factor classification with one level of treatment. A sample size of 120 subjects was purposively drawn from a population of 27,057 students from five schools in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education. The instrument used for data collection was an adapted version of the Violence Proneness Scale (VPS) developed by Tarter, Kirisci, Vanyukov, Cornelius, Pajer, Shoal, and Giancola, (2002). With the use of paired samples t-test, results revealed that there is significant difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression among all students. Among the recommendations offered was that professional Counsellors who work especially with secondary school students should take cognizance of the fact that students may be particularly vulnerable to the negative impact of aggression that stems from a variety of sources. This will assist the Counsellors to develop further the intervention strategy which has proven very effective to help students cope with potentially overwhelming behavioural requirements.

Introduction
Human beings are capable of acting with enormous compassion and kindness, actions which may even involve altruistic self sacrifice of one kind or another. Even in everyday life, human beings have a striking propensity to be supportive to others, to offer comfort and help, to shape their behaviour 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. A few are capable of acts of grotesque cruelty which amount to evil (Thornton, 2008). Aggression simply implies hostile, injurious, or destructive behaviour or outlook especially when caused by frustration and it covers a wide range of activities including verbal or physical bullying, extreme
temper tantrums, and fights on the playground, cruelty to animals, vandalism, starting fires, verbal abuse, and self-mutilation. A wide range of terms are used to describe behavioural and conduct problems and for the purpose of this study the terms ‘violence’, ‘violent behaviour’ and ‘aggression’ were used interchangeably to encompass the range of behaviours described earlier.

The development and subsequent indication of aggression have been documented in literature thus, scientifically, gross morphological disturbances in the brain, particularly the prefrontal cortex, have been reported in homicidal adults (Raine, Buchsbaum & LaCasse, 1997) and it should also be noted that youth at high risk for violence have low executive cognitive capacity (Giancola, 2000). Biochemical mechanisms that have been implicated to predispose to violence include low serotonin level (Virkkunen, Rawlings, Tokala, Poland, Guilotti, Nemeroff and Bissette, 1994), low cortisol reactivity (Vanyukov, Moss, Plail, Blackson, Mezzich and Tarter, 1993), and high testosterone level (Daitzman & Zuckerman, 1980).

In the field of psychology and sociology some factors have also been connected with the development and heightened risk of adolescent aggression and violence. Such factors include a deficiency in social skills required for resolving incipient violent encounters (Slaby, and Guerra 1988), the belief that it is acceptable to behave violently (Paschall and Flewelling, 1997), incapacity to manage feelings of anger (Guerra and Slaby, 1990), misinterpretation of the intentions of others (Dodge, Price, Bachorowsky and Newman, 1990), hopelessness about the future (DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergast, Slavens and Linder, 1994), and low self-esteem (Phinney & Charira, 1992). The opportunity for violence is also strongly contingent on social contextual factors. As youth disengage from parental supervision, the friendship network exerts an increasingly powerful influence on behavior. Adolescents who are delinquent and aggressive
affiliate with peers who are similarly aggressive and delinquent (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest & Gariepy, 1988).

Counselling is a prospect for behaviour modification and rehabilitation through therapies like the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). Previously called rational therapy and rational emotive therapy, REBT is a comprehensive, active-directive, philosophically and empirically based psychotherapy which focuses on resolving emotional and behavioral problems and disturbances and enabling people to lead happier and more fulfilling lives. REBT was created and developed by the American psychotherapist and psychologist Albert Ellis who was inspired by many of the teachings of Asian, Greek, Roman and modern philosophers. Precursors of certain fundamental aspects of REBT have been identified in various ancient philosophical traditions, particularly Stoicism. For example, Ellis' first major publication on rational therapy describes the philosophical basis of REBT as the principle that a person is rarely affected emotionally by outside things but rather by “his perceptions, attitudes, or internalized sentences about outside things and events.” (Ellis, 1962:54).

One of the fundamental premises of REBT is that humans, in most cases, do not merely get upset by unfortunate adversities, but also by how they construct their views of reality through their language, evaluative beliefs, meanings and philosophies about the world, themselves and others (Ellis, 2001). This concept has been attributed as far back as the Greek Philosopher Epictetus, who is often cited as utilizing similar ideas in antiquity (http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/epictetus.htm). In REBT, clients usually learn and begin to apply this premise by learning the A-B-C-model of psychological disturbance and change. The A-B-C model states that it normally is not merely an A, adversity (or activating event) that contributes to disturbed and dysfunctional emotional and behavioral Cs, consequences, but also what people B, believe about the A, adversity. A, adversity
can be either an external situation or a thought or other kind of internal event, and it can refer to an event in the past, present, or future (Dryden & Neenan, 2003).

The Bs, beliefs that are most important in the A-B-C model are explicit and implicit philosophical meanings and assumptions about events, personal desires, and preferences. The Bs, beliefs that are most significant are highly evaluative and consist of interrelated and integrated cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects and dimensions. According to REBT, if a person's evaluative B, belief about the A, activating event is rigid, absolutistic and dysfunctional, the C, the emotional and behavioral consequence, is likely to be self-defeating and destructive. Alternatively, if a person's evaluative B, belief is preferential, flexible and constructive, the C, the emotional and behavioral consequence is likely to be self-helping and constructive.

Through REBT, by understanding the role of their mediating, evaluative and philosophically based illogical, unrealistic and self-defeating meanings, interpretations and assumptions in upset, people often can learn to identify them, begin to D, dispute, refute, challenge and question them, distinguish them from healthy constructs, and subscribe to more constructive and self-helping constructs (Ellis, 1994).

**Statement of the Problem**

There are many devastating and fearful things that had happened as a result of violence. Alarmingly, students are mostly involved or they are the perpetrators in total. Reports of such is common in the society now: violent outburst at school, display of a weapon in a rude manner, inciting riot, violence towards teacher, assault, assault with deadly weapon, fire setting, battery, armed robbery, rape, assault with intent to commit murder, voluntary manslaughter and many more. The nature of the issue of ‘seniority’ in our schools had given some students chances to punish others, which when carefully looked into sometimes can be categorized as a disguised
aggression. It is also a known fact that some students are involved with the notorious area boys (also referred to as ‘Kauraye’) gangs that recently have alarmingly increased in number. Such groups are known for their violence on each other and also for unleashing such on innocent souls too. These insights suggest a need for a fresh look at other means aimed at stopping youth aggression/violence. Thus, a study of this nature became desirable especially since it is an intervention strategy to reduce aggressive behaviour which may be regarded as a probable contributing factor to what the students may commit later on in life. The main thrust of this study therefore, was to find out the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (Herein after, referred to also as REBT) in reducing aggressive behaviour among Senior Secondary School Students in Katsina State.

**Research Objectives**

The formulated objectives of this study were to find out:

1. If there is difference in reducing aggression between students exposed to the REBT intervention and those in the control.
2. If there is difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression between male and female students.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. Is there difference in reducing aggression between students exposed to the REBT intervention and those in the control?
2. Is there difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression between male and female students?
Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated to guide the conduct of the study.

H01 There is no significant difference in reducing aggression between students exposed to the REBT intervention and those in the control.

H02 There is no significant difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression between male and female students.

Research Design

This study employed a one-group pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design. This is one form of what is regarded as true experimental design in education because it controls most of the threats to internal validity of an experiment. They are the designs that attempt to achieve experimental isolation akin to the laboratory isolation achieved by the natural sciences (Sambo, 2008).

The model used is a two-factor classification with a level of the treatment variable. The model measured the effect of the therapy (the treatment or independent variable) and gender (Male and Female) in reducing aggression (the criterion or dependent variable). This type of design required that the participants be tested with the same instrument before and after the treatment. The researcher determined the effects of treatment by comparing the pre-test and the post-test results of the participants (Olusakin & Aremu, 2009).

Population, Samples and Sampling Procedure

The study specifically chooses its samples from Senior Secondary Schools of Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education with a population of 27,057 students (Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Katsina State Ministry of Education, 2011). The population of the study shares the same homogeneity in their language, culture and religion in that they are mostly Hausas.
and Muslims. Subjects for this study were drawn through judgmental sampling technique. The study decided on using this technique based on the fact that it aimed at only those students with record of contact with the police, those who keep bad company, those who are having difficulty adjusting academically, those who are having any problems with peers, those who have broken school laws, those who are exercising unnecessary seniority on juniors and those who have school disciplinary record and/or those with problem in attendance record. Participants were selected based on the degree of the exhibited problem in an ascending order. Furthermore, those selected were asked to respond to Children Inventory of Anger (ChIA) developed by Nelson and Finch (2000) and only those with a percentile score of more than 50% were then used for the study.

Thus, a sample of 120 students were drawn for the study, this constituted a 95% confidence interval with a Margin of Error of about ±8.92% (http://research-advisors.com/, 2006). But, to guard against any selection bias, an equal number of 24 students were purposively selected from five chosen schools (Table 1). Sixty (60) students were equally assigned in to REBT and the Control groups.

Table 1: The Schools and the Sampled Number of Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Male Sample</th>
<th>Female Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SUNCAIS Katsina</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GCK (Pilot) Katsina</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>GGC (Senior) Katsina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>GGSS Jibia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>GSSS Natsinta</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrumentation

The instrument employed to collect data in this study was an adapted version of the Violence Proneness Scale (VPS) scale developed by Tarter, Kirisci, Vanyukov, Cornelius, Pajer, Shoal, and Giancola, (2002). Is a scale to assess proneness to commit an act of violence developed
based on a series of iterative analyses by using items from the revised Drug Use Screening Inventory which correlated with the total score on the Andrew Severity and History of Offenses Scale. Scale construction and subsequent confirmation of its psychometric properties, consisting of six stages, were conducted within a group of 417 boys between 12–14 years of age. The psychometric properties of the Violence Proneness Scale were documented. The coefficient of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha=0.79) and the average correlation of item and total test score (r=0.42) indicate that the Violence Proneness Scale has satisfactory reliability.

The modified instrument was scrutinized by experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto to ensure its validation for the current study. Factor analysis of the VPS under the basic factors of school adjustment and peer relations obtained a unanimous agreement as to content and quality of the items, thus it was deemed to have both content and construct validity.

The reliability was established by the measure of equivalence. This was done through pilot testing by administering the adapted version of the VPS to a group of students (N=80) at G. S. S. K/Kaura and after an interval of four weeks another test was administered with the same set of students. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient produced an index of 0.77.

The treatment was based on an adopted REBT package developed by Adeoye (2009) that spelt out procedural skills and techniques taken in disseminating an efficient counselling intervention. The package consisted of weekly counselling sessions for a period of at least seven weeks, designed based on the short term nature of REBT intervention. The package was validated by experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Through test re-test technique carried out among undergraduate students, a reliability index of 0.69 was also realized.
Paired samples t-test statistics was used in testing the formulated null hypotheses. Statistical treatment and analysis was performed using the IBM® SPSS® software for Windows Version 20.

**Procedure for Treatment**

Subjects for the study were treated with an adopted REBT intervention package developed by Adeoye (2009). A period of seven weeks was taken for the intervention which was broken up into weekly sessions. During the sessions, students in the experimental group were exposed to specific REBT based skills and techniques of coping with aggression while those in the control group were exposed to conventional and general discussion about aggression.

**Presentation, Analyses and Interpretation of Results**

**H01:** There is no significant difference in reducing aggression between students exposed to the REBT intervention and those in the control.

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the post-test scores of the two groups to t-test analysis as presented in table 2.

**Table 2:** Difference in the Effect of REBT Intervention in Reducing Aggression among Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t-Cal</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REBT</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>44.20</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>25.37</td>
<td>.486</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows a paired sample t-test indicating that scores were significantly higher for the control group ($M = 25.37, SD = .486$) than for the REBT group ($M = 16.08, SD = 1.59$), $t(59) = 44.2, p < .001, d = 5.71$. This indicates that there was difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression between those in the REBT group and those in the control. Therefore, H01 which stated that there is no significant difference in reducing aggression between students exposed to the REBT intervention and those in the control group is not accepted.
**H02**: *There is no significant difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression among male and female students.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the post-test scores of the male and female students to t-test analysis as presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Difference in the Effect of REBT Intervention in Reducing Aggression among Male Female Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>t-Cal</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.231</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 3 above, a paired sample t-test indicated that scores were significantly higher for the male students ($M = 19.6, SD = 3.49$) than for the female students ($M = 18.6, SD = 3.26$), $t(59) = 1.21, p > .05, d = 0.15$. This indicates that there was no difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression among male and female students in Senior Secondary Schools in Katsina State. Therefore, H02 which stated that there is no significant difference in the effect of REBT intervention in reducing aggression among male and female students in Senior Secondary Schools in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education is retained.

**Discussion of the Findings**

From the results of the findings, REBT intervention was found to be effective (61.4% gain) in reducing aggression among the students in the area of study. This is in accord with the findings of the study by Fives, Kong, Fuller and DiGiuseppe (2011), which examined whether a combination of anger, hostility, and irrational beliefs, i.e., intolerance of rules frustration, intolerance of work frustration, demands for fairness, and self-downing would predict physical, verbal, and indirect aggression and peer ratings of aggression. Follow-up analysis tested gender as a moderator of the relations between irrational beliefs and aggression, and anger and aggression among one hundred and thirty-five high school-aged adolescents. Results demonstrated that
gender, anger, and an irrational belief of intolerance of rules frustration predicted physical aggression, while anger and irrational belief of intolerance of rules frustration uniquely predicted indirect aggression. Anger alone predicted verbal aggression. Males were more likely to report higher rate of physical aggression and were voted to be more aggressive by their peers.

Another study that is in support of these ones is that of Sukhodolsky, Solomon and Perine (2000), which investigated the effectiveness of a 10-session, weekly, anger-control intervention for aggressive fourth- and fifth-grade boys. Compared to the attention-control condition, participants of the treatment group (REBT) displayed a significant reduction on teacher reports of aggressive and disruptive behavior ($p < .02$) and a significant improvement on self-reports of anger control ($p < .05$).

These findings further agreed with studies like that of Barekatain, Taghavi, Salehi, and Hasanzadeh (2006) which examined the effectiveness of group therapy in reducing aggressive behaviors of adolescents randomly assigned into the group of Rational-Emotive-Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and a control group and conclusively revealed that the intervention group was superior to control group in reduction of aggressive behaviors in adolescents.

On the whole, studies by Ghafoori and Tracz (2004), Beck and Fernandez (1998), Gonzalez, Nelson, Terry, Saunders, Galloway and Shwery (2004) systematically review the available research on Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) with children and adolescents. Meta-analytic procedures were applied to 19 studies that met inclusion criteria. The overall mean weighted effect of REBT was positive and significant. Weighted $z_r$ effect sizes were also computed for five outcome categories: anxiety, disruptive behaviors, irrationality, self-concept, and grade point average. In terms of magnitude, the largest positive mean effect of REBT was on disruptive behaviors. Analyses also revealed the noteworthy finding that children benefited
more from REBT than adolescents. Conclusively, some evidence of REBT effectiveness in treating emotional disturbance in offender populations, and mixed evidence of REBT effectiveness in reducing re-offending has been indicated by Debidin and Dryden (2011) and hence, concluded that interventions using REBT might be a promising approach for aiding criminal justice aims to reduce re-offending.

That may be why studies like that of Robb (2007) examine how forgiving, long encouraged by practitioners of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), is shown to be an elegant antidote to anger. And it has also been suggested that the addition of a specialized cognitive behavioral component increased the effectiveness of the intervention (Flanagan, Allen & Henry, 2010).

Conclusion

From the findings and discussion of the results, it was concluded that REBT intervention is effective in reducing aggression among students. There was also no difference in the effect of REBT in reducing aggression among male and female secondary school students in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education.

Implications for Counselling

The following are implications for counselling:

1. Utilization of other counselling interventions like the reality therapy, social skills training etc. should be done and enhanced in order to help students to engage in positive behavioral adjustments so that they become acceptable members of the society.

2. Through personal-social counselling students should also be made to strongly understand the need to maintain good behaviors which can prove favorable to maintaining healthy relationships with others.
3. Counsellors should play significant roles in counselling students on the need to engage in activities which are self fulfilling and which also guarantee the positive overall development of the society.

Recommendations

The results of the study revealed the effectiveness of REBT in the reduction of aggression among secondary school students in Katsina Zonal Directorate of Education. Considering these, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Professional Counsellors should utilize the REBT intervention as it has proven effective in the reduction of aggression among students exposed to it. They should further develop this intervention strategy which has helped students cope with such kind of potentially overwhelming behavioural requirements.

2. Interventions using specific REBT-based skills and principles should be employed as promising treatment for reducing aggression among all students, most especially the females. Hence, punishments should not be relied upon as the only solution to such kind of problem.

References


