Effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Academic Performance of Students with low grades in Babcock University High School, Ilisan-Remo, Ogun Sate. Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) on Academic Performance of Students with low grades in Babcock University junior secondary school, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State. A single group pre-test post-test experimental research design was adopted. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 21 volunteers from Babcock University junior secondary school students who scored below acceptable average percentage pass in their previously concluded internal examinations. Intervention on REBT was administered while Automatic Thought Questionnaire (ATQ) was used to screen the participants before their involvement in the study. Their previous academic and post intervention academic results were compared, using paired t-test inferential statistics which tested null hypothesis that was rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed that the REBT was potent in improving the academic performance of students with low grades. It was recommended that REBT should be adopted for improving academic performance of students with low grades.

Keyword: Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, academic performance, Low grade, emotional disturbance, psychological needs

Introduction

Excellent academic performance of students at all levels has positive implications on the economy of a nation. According to Ali, Jusoff, Syukriah, Najah, Salamt & Syafena (2009), students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and manpower for the country thus responsible for the country's socio-economic development. Hence, strategies for improving students' academic performance should be prioritised. However, research has shown that improved academic performance of students could be hindered by a number salient of factors. And learners' state of mind is one of such factors. According to Izard (2002), mind related issues that are associated with academic success of students have been neglected, even though "emotions" contain useful information that can guide cognition and action. His assertion was based on the premise that emotional disposition of the learner should be put into consideration for cognitive wellness, necessary for improved academic performance. This implies that what goes on in the mind of the learner can predict and influence the quality of teaching/learning outcome. Therefore, improved academic performance requires both physical and psychological needs of the learner. Hence, identification of learners' needs that could have significant influence on their behaviour should be part of teaching/learning objectives because published evidence has shown that there will be a significant improvement in the individual's feelings and behaviour, if his/her irrational emotions decrease (Ellis & Harper, 2010).

Consequently, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy covers a variety of techniques in which children and adolescents are taught to use cognitive strategy as a means of guiding their behaviour, with the ultimate goal of positive behavioural and mental adjustment. REBT teaches rational critical thinking skills and effective psychological problem-solving methods. These are skills that students can apply throughout their lives to cope effectively with the inevitable changes and challenges they will meet (Knaus, 2001). The REBT programme aids student in boosting resilience, build critical thinking resources, develop coping competencies, advance general reasoning skills, tolerate frustration, and maintain a realistic perspective. REBT intervention can help address unhelpful thoughts and emotions students are likely to experience in and out of the classroom which has the potential to increase academic achievement (Jeffery, 2010).

According to Durlak et al (1991), the basic premise underlying REBT is that emotional disturbances emerge from faulty thinking about events rather than the events themselves. Ellis (2003) hypothesised that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy's (REBT) central premise is that events alone do not cause a person to feel depressed, energed, or highly anxious. Rather, it is one's beliefs about the events which contribute to unhealthy feelings and self defeating behaviours. In other words, the therapy proposes that human beings have emotional disturbances, not by what happens but through their interpretation and thoughts about what happened. As a result, unhealthy negative emotions
like anxiety, anger, depression, shame and guilt emerge frequently, leading to negative behavioural consequences (Dryden, 2003). REBT helps to teach rational critical thinking skills and effective psychological driven problem-solving methods. These are skills that students can apply throughout their lives to cope effectively with the inevitable changes and challenges they will meet. It has excellent behavioural techniques that could provide students with framework from which to explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours in classroom settings (Trip et al, 2007).

Therefore, improved academic performance of students has numerous positive multiplier effects. Hence, the best of psychological strategies that can engender the ability of learners (especially those who perform below average) to positively be in control of their thoughts and improve on their academic performance in both internal and external examinations are helpful. Therefore, the study investigated the effect of REBT on academic performance of students with low grades.

![Figure 1: Theoretical Framework for the Study (Dryden, 2003)](image)

REBT is a form of cognitive behaviour therapy that emphasizes reorganizing cognitive and emotional functions, redefining problems, and changing attitudes in order to develop more acceptable patterns of behaviour. From REBT framework, F connotes new feeling from the effect of REBT intervention, called E. The D is the core of the theory. It helps disputes negative emotional behavioural consequences which are represented by C from negative belief which is denoted by B about activating events, called A. Hence, the D is a major determinant of A and B. If negative believe is disputed, it will have positive effects on A and C, thereby leading to positive E and F.

**Hypothesis**

H01: There is no significant effect of rational emotive behavioural therapy on academic performance of students with low grades.

**Methodology**

The single group experimental research design was used for the study. The participants of the study were twenty-one (21) Basic eight (8) Babcock University High school students. They were all between the ages of eleven (11) and twelve (12) years. Thirteen (13) of them were male while eight (8) were female. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants who had been invited by the school’s special assembly panel for performing below acceptable average percentage pass in their examinations. Informed consent form was filled by the participants after they were assured of the confidentiality of their inclusion in the study. In addition, the researcher sought the permission of the school management before conducting the study.

The participants were exposed to REBT based intervention package for six weeks. The participants were assembled in a class and questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention to determine participants that were qualified to take part in the study. After screening, all the participants were qualified to take part. The intervention was given six weeks before the participants’ promotion examination, three times in a week, and for 30 minutes for each session. The participants’ previous results for second term examination before intervention on REBT were used as baseline data. After the intervention and the conduct of their promotion examination, difference between their pre-test and post-test academic results were
compared to determine any significant effects of treatment on the participants’ academic performance. Automatic Thoughts Questionnaire ($r=0.76$), a standardised instrument was used to measure the frequency of automatic negative dispositions, as well as emotional being of the participants, thereby using it to screen them for participation for the study. It was used to assess the rationality of the participants’ responses to challenging emotional situations. REBT intervention was used to dispute participants’ irrational beliefs and thoughts. The academic results of the participants for the previous (second) term were used to generate baseline data for the dependent variable. After their training on REBT, their pre-intervention results were used to determine effects of intervention on their post-intervention academic results. Hence, average percentage in the academic record of each of the participants result for previous term was used for pre-test data and it was compared with their post-intervention average percentage academic record in their subsequent examination (third term). Descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyse data generated from the instrument, mean, standard deviation and paired t-test were used to analyse the participants’ previous examination results (overall percentage) and post intervention scores to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

**Test of Hypothesis**

There is no significant effect of rational emotive behavioural therapy on academic performance of students with low grades

The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of rational emotive behaviour therapy on academic performance of students with poor academic status was tested using paired t-test analysis.

| Table 4: Summary of comparison of participants’ mean scores generated from their previous (second term) academic and subsequent (third term) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Statistics</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 PRE INTERVENTION RESULTS</td>
<td>54.95</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.6419</td>
<td>1.0130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST INTERVENTION RESULT</td>
<td>58.23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.3001</td>
<td>.9383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 PRE INTERVENTION RESULTS &amp; POST INTERVENTION RESULT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 PRE INTERVENTION RESULTS - POST INTERVENTION RESULT</td>
<td>3.2857</td>
<td>2.5718</td>
<td>4.4564</td>
<td>2.1150</td>
<td>5.855</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above indicated a baseline mean score of 54.95 and post intervention mean score of 58.23 for 21 participants. Hence, average percentage scores in the academic record of each of the participants' results from previous examination results were compared with their average percentage results in their subsequent examination. Paired t-test was run and calculated to determine whether there was a statistically significant
mean difference between their pre and post intervention results. The mean difference was 3.28 with standard deviation of 2.571. Consequently, calculated t-value = 5.855 and the p value was tested at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant effect of rational emotive behaviour therapy on academic performance of students with low grades.

Discussion
This result shows that there was significant difference in the mean scores of the participants at baseline and post-intervention. And the null hypothesis was rejected. Findings from the study revealed that all the participants performed better in their post intervention examination results than the previous one. This implied that nineteen out of the participants that should have repeated were promoted to the next class while there was improvement in the performance of two participants that could not meet promotion criteria. Hence, rational emotive behaviour therapy can have positive effect on performance of students with low academic grades when they are exposed to routine REBT based intervention. This corroborates with the opinion of Ellis & Harper (2010) in their assertion, that published evidence has already shown that there will be a significant improvement in the individual's feelings and behaviour, if his/her irrational beliefs decrease. In addition, the finding justified the assertion of Williams Knaus (2001), where he noted that REBT is an educational programme designed for classroom delivery aimed at helping children to develop optimally through promotion of rational thinking and helpful behaviour, leading to improved academic performance. In addition, the study corroborates the findings of Trip, Vernon & McMahon (2007), where they concluded that there was a correlation between REBT programme and higher school grades. They hypothesised further that it aids students in boosting resilience, building critical thinking resources, develop coping competencies, advance general reasoning skills, tolerate frustration, and maintain a realistic perspective. In another related findings, Izard (2002), concluded that improved academic performance of students could be hindered by a number salient of factors. And learners' state of mind is one of such factors. He stated further that mind related issues that are associated with academic success of students have been neglected, even though "emotions" contain useful information that can guide cognition and action. His assertion was based on the premise that emotional disposition of the learner should be put into consideration for cognitive wellness, necessary for improved academic performance. Hence, emotional disturbances and unsettlement can negatively interfere with improved academic performance of students if psychological services that have direct bearing on their needs are not identified and administered.

Conclusion
It could be concluded that there is need for administration of psychological solutions such as REBT based intervention that will strengthen thought patterns and reduce cognitive anxiety for sustained perception of control towards the realisation of desired results among students with poor academic records. They will be more conscious of the judgments they make in their minds about performance behaviour which could help them cope with perceived negative emotions when exposed to teaching learning environment, thereby enhancing their ability to focus on relevant cues, necessary for improved and significant academic performance.

Recommendations
1 It is recommended that psychological trainings for students with poor academic history be designed by school administrators. This could help in the discovery of stress and other militating factors that have to do with the mind (internal environment) students experience which could negatively affect their academic performances.
2 Mechanism for monitoring academic wellness of students before examination will be helpful.
3 Periodic investigative research should be conducted in schools to ascertain psychological needs of learners.
4 There is need for focus group discussion and development of instrument necessary for collating data on students' emotional wellness.

References


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