EFFECTIVENESS OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY ON ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study is an empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) on in-school adolescents in Abia State with low academic self-efficacy. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study employed a quasi-experimental design of pretest, posttest non-randomized control group using gender as moderator variable. A total of 24 in-school adolescents were purposively sampled from a population of 687 using Academic Self-efficacy Identification Questionnaire (ASIQ). A 22-item instrument developed by the researchers validated by three experts was used to collect data and psychometric properties established. Before the commencement of the programme, the researchers assured the subjects of confidentiality of information provided in therapy. Pre-treatment assessment (pre-test) was conducted using the ASIQ in order to collect baseline data. Thereafter, the treatment group was exposed to 45 minutes of the REBT programme twice for a period of 4 weeks. The treatment took place between June/July, 2023. Post-test assessment was conducted one week after the last treatment session. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed the efficacy of rational emotive behaviour therapy in enhancing academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents. There were no gender disparities in treatment outcomes. It was recommended that counsellors should employ rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) to help in-school adolescents enhance their academic self-efficacy.

Key Words: Rational emotive behaviour therapy, in-school adolescents, Academic Self-efficacy.

Introduction

Adolescence is the period between infancy and adulthood where young individuals attempt to act and accomplish things on their own. Adolescence is critical developmental period influenced by physiological, psychological, temporal, and cultural perspectives (Steinberg, 2021). Traditionally, the years between the onset of puberty and the establishment of social independence are thought to be this critical developmental era. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) recognizes adolescents as those aged 10 to 24. The changes that occur throughout this period cause a lot of issues for both adolescents and society. Other developmental tasks could include learning to get along with friends of all genders, accepting and maintaining one's physical physique, and becoming more self-sufficient. Academic self-efficacy is one of the concerns and challenges that adolescents experience.

Academic self-efficacy is a term that refers to ones belief in his or her own ability and control in academic pursuits. According to Bandura, in Abdullah et al. (2018), academic self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to arrange and carry out the courses of action required to manage upcoming problems. In other words, academic self-efficacy is a person's confidence in his or her ability to succeed in academic pursuits. Academic self-efficacy is characterized as an individual's psychological understanding of themselves as a result of their learning experiences which influences their level of self-concept, confidence, worth, behaviours, and other responses. Finney and Schraw (2017) defined academic self-efficacy as people's or students' ideas about their ability to achieve desired academic outcomes by their own efforts. These ideas are believed to be among the most important drivers of student behaviour and perseverance in the face of hurdles, challenges, and inadequacies in academic endeavours. Academic self-efficacy is a dynamic motivational belief that influences the goals we set, how hard we persist, and the amount of effort we employ (DiBenedetto & Schunk, 2022). As encapsulated by Zheng (2024), academic self-efficacy is an individual's subjective assessment of his or her ability and achievement in learning.

Academic self-efficacy can be divided into two categories - low and high. Adolescents with high or positive academic self-efficacy seek answers and express dissatisfaction without demeaning

themselves or others when difficulties arise; they are more mature and stable (Von Soest et al., 2018). Students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to be motivated to learn, set ambitious goals, and persevere through challenges. (Owolabi & Owolabi, 2024).

People with low academic self-efficacy, on the other hand, tend to be hypersensitive, with fragile senses that are quickly hurt by others; they are hyper attentive and hyper alert to indicators of rejection, inadequacy, and rebuff in relation to examinations or academic activity. Adolescents with low or negative academic self-efficacy believe they are unworthy, inept, and incompetent, and as a result, they may rebel against their parents, stay out late, or flee the house. Adolescents with low academic self-efficacy are more likely to violate school rules and regulations, including fighting, interrupting classrooms, defying school authorities, and insulting teachers (Hamoud et al., 2021). In social situations, they engage in undesirable behaviours with their classmates, such as foul language, poor self-control, absenteeism, and temper tantrums, among others. As a result, they and their peers engage in disputes in schools and on the streets. Adolescents with low academic self-efficacy are more likely to struggle in school (Arshad et al., 2015).

Given the negative impacts of low academic self-efficacy on adolescents and its significant prevalence, there is need for psychological intervention aimed at increasing their levels of academic self-efficacy. Low self-efficacy appears to impair interpersonal communication. According to studies, many people around the world, especially students, feel timid as a result of low academic self-efficacy. According to Liu et al. (2017), 49% of Americans, 31% of Israelis, 40% of Germans, 55% in Taiwan, 55% in Japan, and 57% in Nigeria identified themselves as shy.

Academic self-efficacy has been shown to account to small changes in students' performance contexts, interact with self-regulated learning processes, and moderate students' academic progress (Akay & Boz, 2020). Most students' academic beliefs or thoughts appear to be self-defeating, and can be suppressed utilizing intervention tactics such as rational emotive behaviour therapy. This study focused on enhancing academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents Abia State.

Few research work looked at a psychotherapeutic ways to enhance academic self-efficacy. Obi and Nicholas (2018) and Mbakwe and Enwere (2021), investigated psychological interventions using

Albert Ellis' rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) but not on academic self-efficacy. According to Mahfar and Senin (2015), REBT asserts that people consciously and unconsciously construct emotional difficulties such as self-blame, self-pity, clinical anger, hurt, guilt, shame, depression, and anxiety, as well as behavioural tendencies such as procrastination, compulsiveness, avoidance, addiction, and withdrawal, through irrational and self-defeating thinking. While utilizing REBT, individuals are taught to dispute their irrational thoughts and beliefs, set goals and develop a mindset that enables them to reduce stress and other maladaptive behaviours (Leziah, 2022).

The ABCDEF model comprises six components namely A-activating events, B-the belief systems, C-emotional and behavioural consequences, D-disputation E-new effects and F- new feelings. The ABCDEF model is a fundamental aspect of REBT designed to help individuals identify and alter irrational beliefs that lead to emotional distress and maladaptive behaviours. The model's components serve as a roadmap for cognitive restructuring. In REBT, the therapist actively engages the client on how to identify irrational and self-defeating beliefs and philosophies. REBT uses the ABCDEF model to train clients. This model explains in detail how an individual's emotional disturbance like low academic self-efficacy is caused by an irrational belief system (Obi & Nicholas, 2020).

Yuleh (2020) noted that behaviours such as low academic self-efficacy and negative thoughts can be handled by REBT. Binder (2021) and Robert (2021) found that REBT intervention can adequately reduce stress levels. Recent evidence suggests that reductions in irrational beliefs brought about by REBT can facilitate increased academic success (Sari et al., 2022). Although low academic self-efficacy cannot be completely eliminated, the way a student sees it and arranges his thoughts can go a long way toward assisting that student in making required modifications and continuing with his academic pursuit.

It is expected that rational emotive behaviour therapy will increase academic self-confidence among students, consequently enhancing academic performance among in-school adolescents in the study area. However, the technique's usefulness in increasing academic self-efficacy had not

been determined at the time of this investigation in the study area. The trust of this study, therefore, is to empirically determine the efficacy of rational emotive behaviour therapy in enhancing academic self-efficacy among in-school adolescents in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

Learners, regardless of their educational level, are expected to demonstrate some level of self-efficacy. Adolescents in schools are expected to have high levels of academic self-efficacy, which is the conviction that they have the ability and capacity to positively engage in academic endeavours. These are essential indicators of success in a variety of life pursuits. In other words, in-school adolescents should interact, maintain positive social contact and relationships with their peers, classmates, and teachers, and achieve well academically. However, it has been observed that some adolescents have low levels of academic self-efficacy. Such adolescents rarely connect with their peers or teachers.

There is a wealth of empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of some psychological interventions in enhancing academic self-efficacy of individuals. Findings from western and Nigerian literature show that techniques such as REBT may help to enhance students' level of academic self-efficacy. This study, therefore, focused on empirically evaluating the effectiveness of REBT on enhancing of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents. This is the thrust of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically the objectives of the study are to:

i) determine the mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy and control group at post-test.

ii) find out the effect of REBT in enhancing the level of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents by gender at post-test.

Research Questions

The research questions were posed and answered to guide the study:

RQ1: What is the mean score difference in enhancing the level of academic self-efficacy among in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy and control group at post-test?

RQ2: What is the mean score difference in enhancing the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents treated with rational emotive behaviour therapy based on gender at posttest?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

HO1: There is no significant mean score difference in enhancing the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy and the control group at posttest.

HO2: There is no significant mean score difference in enhancing the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents exposed to REBT and the control group at posttest by gender.

Methodology

The study was conducted in secondary schools in Abia State. The study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest, posttest, and non-randomized control group design to investigate the effect of REBT on academic self-efficacy among in-school adolescents in Abia State. At the time of the study, there were 687 in-school adolescents in Umuahia North L.G.A, Abia State with low academic self-efficacy. The sample for this study consisted of 24 participants chosen from a

population of 687 in-school adolescents who demonstrated low academic self-efficacy as determined by their response on the Academic Self-Efficacy Identification Questionnaire (ASIQ).

Subjects with a score of 2.50 or higher were judged to have low levels of academic self-efficacy and were purposively recruited for the study. There is one treatment group (6 males and 6 females) and one control group (6 males and 6 females), Gender served as a moderator variable.

The Academic Self-Efficacy Identification Questionnaire (ASIQ) was used to collect data. The ASIQ is a 22-item questionnaire designed to assess the level of academic self-efficacy of the subjects. The ASIQ is divided into two components. Section one elicited demographic data. Section two has 22 items structured in clusters for identifying and measuring the level of academic self-efficacy. The ASIQ is a four-point rating scale of Very High level (VHL), High Level (HL), Low Level (LL), and Very Low Level (VLL), with weights of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The ASIQ's negative components were reverse-scored 1, 2, 3, and 4. The cut-off mean was 2.50.

Three experts in Guidance and Counselling, Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation in the College of Education at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture in Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria, validated the instrument. The reliability of ASIQ was determined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and reliability index of 0-85 obtained while the internal consistency was obtained using Cronbach alpha with and index of 0.79. The study's data gathering was primarily divided into three phases, Pre-treatment, treatment and post treatment phases.

Pre-treatment phase included two pre-treatment sessions, as well as preliminary introduction to the sampled secondary schools and study subjects two weeks before treatment. The phase included pre-treatment assessments to identify students with low academic self-efficacy and getting the baseline with ASIQ. Those that met the criteria were purposively assigned the REBT and control group.

Treatment lasted for four weeks. There were two sessions per week. After the initial counselling establishment issues, analysis of the target behaviour and setting of goals, the subjects were exposed to REBT techniques of imaginal disputation, behavioural disputation, emotional control

card, confrontation and encouragement sequentially highlighting the ABCDEF paradigm. There were tasks and assignments which provided opportunities for subjects to practice what they learnt in therapy at home. Post treatment phase took place after a week during which the subjects –those in the treatment group as well as those in the control group were assembled and the ASIQ was reshuffled and administered on them to obtain the post test data. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question I: What is the mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy and control group at post-test?

Table 1: **Pre-test-Post-test Mean and Standard Deviation on Difference in the level of Academic Self-Efficacy of in-school adolescents exposed to REBT and Control Group at Posttest Period**

Source		Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Gain	Mean difference
Groups	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
REBT	12	1.50	.52	3.42	.38	1.92	
							1.75
Control	12	1.50	.47	1.67	.42	.17	

Data in Table 1 revealed that the subjects with academic self-efficacy who were exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) had a pre-test mean score of 1.50 with a standard deviation of.52 and a post-test mean score of 3.42 with a standard deviation of 38. Similarly, the subjects with low academic self-efficacy in the control group had a pre-test mean score of 1.50 with a standard deviation of.47 and a post-test mean score of 1.67 with a standard deviation of.42. The table also demonstrated that respondents with low academic self-efficacy who were exposed to

rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) had a mean increase of 1.92, whereas those in the control group had.17. The mean difference between the rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) and control group was 1.75, implying that subjects with low academic self-efficacy who received rational emotive behaviour therapy had a mean increase in their level of academic self-efficacy compared to their counterparts in the control group. The results showed that using rational emotive behaviour therapy enhanced the level of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents at posttest.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy and the control group at posttest.

Table 2: **Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Difference in the Level of Self-Efficacy between In-school Adolescents with Academic Self-Efficacy exposed to REBT and Control group at Posttest Period**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.067[a]	2	1.033	2.583	.130
Intercept	.022	1	.022	.055	.820
Pre	.400	1	.400	1.000	.343
Group	2.057	1	2.057	5.143	.050
Error	3.600	9	.400		
Total	126.000	12			
Corrected Total	5.667	11			

The results in Table 2 revealed that the F-calculated value of 5.143 in relation to the treatment has a main effect with a probability value of.050 with 2 and 9 degrees of freedom, and is thus significant at the 0.05 level. This suggested that exposing individuals with academic self-efficacy to rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) significantly enhanced their academic self-efficacy. As a result, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between the rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) group and the control group at the post-test period was rejected. Thus, there was a significant mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between the rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) group and the control group at the post-test period.

Research Question II: What is the mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy based on gender at posttest?

Table 3: Pretest/Posttest Mean and Standard deviation on Effect of Gender in enhancing of the Academic Self-Efficacy among in-school adolescents exposed to REBT and the control group at posttest

Groups	N	Pretest $\bar{X}$	SD	Posttest $\bar{X}$	SD	Mean increase	Mean difference
Male	8	42.59	4.51	28.89	4.35	13.7	0.16
Female	4	42.63	4.45	28.77	4.45	13.86	

Table 3 shows the mean score of male and female subjects in the REBT. The male subjects had a pretest mean score of 42.59 with a standard deviation of 4.51 at posttest and 28.89 with a standard deviation of 4.35 with a mean difference of 13.7. the female subjects had mean scores of 42.63 with standard deviation of 4.45 at pre-test and 28.77 with standard deviation of 4.45 at post-test with 13.86 mean score difference. The mean score difference between male and female was 0.16. The findings demonstrate that male and female subjects had slightly different levels of academic self-efficacy at posttest.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant mean score difference in the level of academic self-efficacy between in-school adolescents exposed to REBT and the control group at posttest based on gender.

Table 4.4:   Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Mean Score of Academic Self-Efficacy Enhancing of Male and Female In-School Adolescents Exposed to REBT

Source	Type III Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1023.134[a]	2	511.567	1.625	.000
Intercept	3866.093	1	3866.093	12.280	.001
Pretest	546.329	1	546.329	1.735	.020
Gender	522.910	1	522.910	1.661	.121
Error	2518.600	8	314.825		
Total	55790.000	10			
Corrected Total	5561.733	9			

Table 4.4 shows a calculated value of 1.66 and a P-value of 0.12, which exceeds the alpha value of 0.05. This, however, means that the hypothesis of no statistical significant effect was not rejected. As a result, there is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of male and female students exposed to REBT at posttest period.

Discussion.

The study found that REBT effectively enhanced the level of academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents exposed to REBT. The findings were consistent with that of Binder (2021) and Robert (2021) who found that REBT intervention adequately reduced stress levels. The study also found no significant difference in the treatment effect by gender. In this regard, Akay and Boz (2020) and Campbell and Stevenson (2012) asserted that regardless of gender, REBT enhanced the level of self-efficacy of in-school adolescents.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that REBT was effective in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents and that there was no gender difference in the treatment effects. This was demonstrated by the result that showed that in-school adolescents exposed to REBT had an enhanced level of academic self-efficacy than those in the control group.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1) The government should establish functional Guidance and Counseling programme in all schools and employ professional counsellor to man them..

2) Professional counsellors should utilize rational emotive behavior therapy and other relevant intervention strategies to enhance students' academic self-efficacy considering the importance of self-efficacy in the overall development of an individual.

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