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EFFECTIVENESS OF RELAXATION TECHNIQUE IN REDUCING EXAMINATION ANXIETY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of relaxation technique in reducing examination anxiety among secondary school students. A pre-test, post-test control group design was used in the study. Twenty-four SS III students within Osogbo metropolis participated in the study. They were purposively assigned to two groups: the treatment and control group. A validated instrument titled "Test of anxiety inventory" was administered to the two groups before and after the experiment programme. Analysis of covariance and Duncan Multiply Range Test were used to analyse the data. Results showed anxiety among students'. Based on the findings, in-training education curriculum and that school counselor should employ Relaxation technique in assisting students to cope with examination anxiety.

Keyword: Effectiveness, relaxation techniques, reducing, and examination anxiety.

Introduction

Generally education starts from the cradle to the grave. It is an unending lifelong process. It has been generally acclaimed as a very potent instrument for growth and development of economic, political, social and human resources worldwide (Mbanefo, 2000). Education is also a means by which individual is guided to develop intellectually to acquire certain skills adjudged to be necessary for his living and for upliftment of the society in which he lives (Olayinka, 1993). It is the key to complete human emancipation and it represents critical determinants of the advancement of any society. To underscore the indispensability of education as a great tool for national development, a lot of resources have been committed and is still being committed to the provision of educational facilities and programs at various levels, with the National Policy on Education put in place to properly address the issue of education in Nigerian.

The National Policy of Education (NPE) refers to *education as* an instrument per excellence for effecting national development. The objectives of education as spelt out in the document include:

- i. Raising a generation of people who can think for themselves.
- i. Respect the views and feelings of others
- ii. Respect the dignity of flavour and appreciate those values specified under our board National aims and live as good citizens, and
- iii. Inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life (NPE, 2004).

The Nigeria governments at all tiers are spending lot of money on education in order to achieve the set educational objective. While, teacher are, the set of people equipped with the skills to impart knowledge through the teaching and evaluation. Evaluation is the process of making value judgments for the purpose of decision-making based on a variety of observations or test results. Obe (1980) described evaluation as means of telling what value of score, and it quantitative in nature. One of major ways of evaluation in educational Examination is a very important activity both to the instrument being used for the assessment of individual skills and knowledge both in general and specified areas of studies and overall academic achievement. Examination is a means of evaluating students or learners abilities through a set of question(s) to which students are expected to respond, to determine the outcome of instruction on which value judgment is made. Hence examinations are means of evaluating students and determining their needs (Idowu, 1998).

In the western education system, examination takes a central position as a means of assessment for qualification in various dimensions. It is based on performance for which certificates are awarded. The values of a certificate as a principal tool to earn a living have led to a 'mad rush' to obtain it. Students may consider this as the explanation they give for the examination anxiety they exhibited. Examination anxiety is a fairly common phenomenon that involves feelings of tension or uneasiness that occur before during, or after an examination (Glendale Community College Counseling Center 2000). Olayinka (1993) refers to examination anxiety as the emotional reactions that some students have towards examination. Dickson (2008) sees examination anxiety as student's excessive worry about upcoming examination, fear of being evaluated and apprehension about the consequences of the examination. While, Ronald (1980) noted that many students are anxious about examination because it is often linked to the future, especially when all their friends are achieving and they do not want to be left out of the group. Apart from wanting to be equal with their mate's majority of the students will not like to disappoint their parents, teachers and those who are concerned about their future. Due to these reasons most students always experience examination anxiety especially when they are about to write examination and this may lead to poor performance. For as long as teaching-learning process in the school system does not provide for the emotional adjustment of students, examination anxiety if not attended to can hinder student's educational progress. No doubt examination presents some measure of inevitable stress; unfortunately the anxious students often misconstrue this as synonymous with the prevailing view on education.

Anxiety is a maladaptive behaviour. In the field of psychology there are numerous counseling therapies enhance adaptive behaviour. These therapies are developed by psychologists and are geared towards the eliminations of maladaptive behaviour such as fear, anxiety, neurosis, insecurity, and depression among others. Relaxation techniques are helpful tools for coping with stress and promoting long-term health by slowing down the body and quieting the mind. Such techniques generally entail refocusing attention to those areas of tension.

There is a general apprehension about the falling standard of education, which is often aptly associated with the high incidence of failure rate among Nigerian secondary schools. It is a critical issue, which continues to be source of worries for those who are involved in students' academic programme and the society at large. In Nigeria, relatively little attention has been given to examination anxiety as a contributing factor to examination malpractice.

Whereas, there are multifarious prevailing conditions within the school systems that have jointly and severally induce examination anxiety among our senior secondary school students in Nigeria. It includes inadequate coverage of the syllabus by various teachers, lack of seriousness on the part of the students in preparing for the examination, mass failure for the students at WAEC level on some key subjects, study habits pattern of the students, cancellation of results by the examination bodies, withholding of some results, utterance of threatening statements by the teachers to the students, media negative publications and reports on the cancellation of results and desperation of some parents to have their children pursuing a particular course in the University regardless of such child interest and mental ability to cope. It stands to reason therefore, that examination anxiety is an issue that needs attention. This study therefore, is interested in seeking possible solution for reduction of examination anxiety among secondary school students. In order to enhance excellence in academic performance and integrity among Nigerian students and thereby redeem the image of the "falling standard of education".

Although, there are view research work on examination anxiety in Nigeria, Osiki and Busari (2005) used self-statements monitoring techniques in reducing test anxiety among adolescent underachievers, Obodo (2005) and Egbocuckwu (2005), have successfully employed systematic desensitization therapy in the reduction of test anxiety among adolescents in Nigeria. Similarly, author like Graham, Fellitti, Roderrick and Naeme (1981) carried out study on reduction of examination anxiety among undergraduate students. As at the time this study was being conducted, the researcher was unaware of any such study that had been conducted. The need to research into the reduction of examination anxiety is desirable and urgent. Thus, the need for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The situation whereby most students always experience examination anxiety especially when they are about to write examination need to be address in order to prevent poor performance. Therefore, this study sought to determine the effectiveness of relaxation technique in reducing examination anxiety among secondary students.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were generated to carry out this study:

1. there is no significant effect of treatment on the level of examination anxiety among students exposed to relaxation technique
2. gender has no significant influence on the effect of Realization technique on the level of examination anxiety among students.

Purpose of the study

This study was an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of relaxation technique in reducing examination anxiety among secondary schools students. The impact of gender on the effectiveness of the treatment package was also investigated to determine the versatility of the application of the therapy.

Research Design

All senior secondary school students in Osogbo, Nigeria formed the population for the study and all senior secondary school 111 students in Osogbo constituted the target population. It was believed that students of this class would have better understanding about the concept of examination anxiety; especially because they were in class where final examinations were to be taken. The multistage sampling techniques were used in selecting the sample for the study.

Two schools were selected for the study through diphat method of simple random sampling. Stratified random sampling was used to select forty-eight (48) students from each school; thus, 96 students from the two schools constituted the study sample. After the administration of the pre-test the students with high examination anxiety were called together.

Then, 24 students who were interested in the programme were purposively assigned to the two (2) groups, (Treatment and control group).

Instrumentation

Test Anxiety Inventory was adapted by this researcher from Spiels Berger (1980). The instrument comprises 20 statements describing different forms of text anxiety on a 4 point Likert scale: Almost never (1) Sometimes (2) Often (3). Almost always (4) the highest possible score on the instrument is 80 (4x20) while the lowest possible score is 20(1x20).

The average value between lower class Limit and the upper class limit was calculated to determine the mid – point of the examination anxiety inventory marks Therefore. Students who scored 51 and above on the instrument participated in the study.

Validity

The validity of test anxiety inventory is ensured through expert review to ascertain its content, face and criterion reference validity.

Reliability

The reliability of Test Anxiety Inventory was determined using co-efficient of stability. This was determined using test-retest method. The researcher administered the instrument twice to 20 students (SSS III) who were not part of the target population at an interval of four weeks. Scores generated from both Administrator were correlated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation coefficient. The result snowed a correlation of 0.78. Thus, the instrument was considered to be appropriate for the study-

Research procedure

The students that received the treatment were those in the experimental group A; the group was exposed to relaxation technique, which entailed acquiring training on progressive muscular relaxation. The treatment lasted for seven weeks. It was executed through a series of lectures, focus group discussion, role-playing, and demonstration and take home assignments. The researcher training adopted a participatory approach in such a way that the students demonstrated relaxation skills during the training. The lectures were arranged in such a way that one lecturer built on the previous one for continuity.

The opening remark oriented the students to the entire programme. The students were trained on such topic as:

- i. Meaning, types, purpose of examination anxiety.
- ii. Causes of examination anxiety and rationale for training in relaxation.
- iii. Taking students through progressive relaxation.
- iv. Teaching practical suggestions on how to write examination without anxiety.

The control group was not exposed to any treatment but they were given lessons on purposes of examination and different study habits. However, students in his control group were moved in the pre-treatment meetings, assignment into groups and response to the post-test questionnaire

Data Analysis

The data obtained were Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) and Duncan's Multiple Range test was employed to determine the effectiveness of the treatment

Result

In this section, the results of the findings for this study are presented in the table below. The results of the analysis of data are presented in Table 1, 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant effect of treatment on the level of examination anxiety among students exposed to relaxation techniques.

Table 1: Summary Result of Pre and Post Treatment Comparison of Students' Examination Anxiety based on Relaxation Training and control using the ANCOVA

Source	Df	SS	Ms	F.Cal	Critical F- Val
Rows	1	299.12	299.12	5.97*	3.00
Columns	1	50.13	50.13		
Interaction		46.10	46.10		
Within	21	1650.96			

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ levels

The result in Table 1 show that significant difference exists between the score of Students who were exposed to the experimental treatment (relaxation training) and those in the control group as a significant F-value ($F=5.97$, $df 1/21$, $p < 05$ was found.

To further determine the difference that exists between the realization group and control group post hoc test was conducted using Duncan Multiple Range Test.

Table 2: Duncan Multiple Range Test Comparing Relaxation and

Group	Mean	Duncan Groupings
1. Relaxation	39,750	A
2 control	47.667	B

Hypothesis 2

Gender has no significant Influence on the effect of Relaxation technique on the level of examination anxiety among students.

Table 3: Summary Results of ANCOVA Pre-and Post-Treatment Comparison of Male and Female in Relaxation training.

Source	Df	SS	Ms	F.Cal	Critical F- Val
Rows	1	189.82	189.82	2.38	3.00
Columns	1	79.62	79.62		
Interaction	1	38.82	38.82		
Within	9	1096.25			

Table 3 reveals that the gender had no significant effect on the level of examination anxiety among student that were exposed to relaxation training. This is an indication that both male and female in relaxation training benefited the same way from the treatment

Discussion

The result of the findings confirmed that relaxation was antagonistic to anxiety and has substantial effect for reduction of examination anxiety. Effectiveness of relaxation technique in the present study cannot rule out the potential effects of non-specific factor such as the impact of the positive Therapist/student relationship. The mere fact that the students were able to see the therapist demonstrated the relaxation exercise could have improved their confidence. This is unlike the control group situation where only time and perhaps maturation could have had some effects on their level of examination anxiety.

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With the statistical significant difference between the students exposed to relaxation technique and those in the control group, it can be deduced that examination anxiety is not transient and as such must be treated. The treatment in this study (Relaxation technique) has provided the skill for the students in this group to handle examination anxiety. This finding corroborated Kendall (1981), who argues that behavioural intervention taught students skills that they can use to manage their anxious moments and that early intervention actually have preventive effects. The finding of the results also supported the beliefs of Davidson and Schwartz (1976), which stated that different types of relaxation technique lead to different patterns of physiological and psychological aspects.

The participants in this study were taken through progressive muscular relaxation technique exercise.

Another possible explanation for the effectiveness of relaxation technique on the level of examination anxiety among students who were exposed to relaxation technique is the fact that the progressive muscular relaxation technique is based on the principle of learning referred to as "reciprocal inhibition" which means that organism cannot take two contradictory responses at the same time. When the body muscles are exercised progressively there is a complete change in the chemistry of the body organs and better atonement of the mind for better responses to reality of life situation, including examination situations. This confirmed that responses of the body organs and the state of the mind are learnt relearned or reconditioned and can be extinguished to develop a new behaviour that lead to the reduction of examination anxiety. Therefore, this study showed that relaxation is quite rewarding in tackling any response to examination anxiety provoking situation.

The findings of the study also showed that both males and female benefited from the treatment and they both learnt how to handle examination anxiety. There are no significant differences in the effectiveness of the relaxation therapeutically mode to which both male and female students were exposed. This result is in consonance with the findings of Egbochukwu (2005) who found no significant difference between male and female students in the reduction of test anxiety at the end of treatment. Also, this finding supported the work of seeley, Storey, wagner, Walker and Watts (2004), in which they found no statistical significant difference between sex and anxiety levels in their study on anxiety level and sex difference in volley ball players. Therefore, relaxation technique is effective in reducing examination anxiety among students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

- For many students to achieve successful academic career in school system relevant assistances must be given to the students so that academic failure can be reduced substantially.
- School counselors should adopt Relaxation techniques as an effective treatment for reducing examination anxiety among students.
- Co-curricular activities such as games and movies (all constituting forms of relaxation) could be encouraged as means of diffusing tension especially among Secondary School Students.

Conclusion

Consequent upon the finding of this, the following conclusions were drawn: Relaxation training is effective in reducing level of examination anxiety. Gender has no influence on the effect of relaxation technique on the level of examination anxiety among students.

The present study has demonstrated that the examination anxiety can be diagnosed, treated and managed. Therefore Guidance Counselors and teachers in schools should adopt the use of relaxation technique in treatment of students with examination anxiety; this will enhance excellent academic performance among students.

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