THE EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND SOCIAL LEARNING THERAPIES IN AMELIORATING TRUANCY AMONG PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies in the reduction of truancy among public senior school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. 130 students participated in the study. Quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group research design was adopted. The Truancy Questionnaire (TQ) was used to gather relevant data. The reliability coefficient obtained using test-retest reliability was 0.62. Two research questions were raised and corresponding hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Mean, standard deviation and Analysis of Covariance Statistics (ANCOVA) were used to test the hypotheses. The investigation revealed that there is significant difference in the post-test scores on emotional disposition and truancy rate among participants exposed to Social Learning and Cognitive Behaviour therapies, while the participants in the control group reported no significant difference. Both counselling strategies were effective in ameliorating the truancy among the senior secondary school students. The study recommended social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies in the reduction of truancy among the students.

Keywords: *Truancy, Social learning, Cognitive behaviour intervention, Senior secondary school students.*

Introduction

The school system is a combination of deliberate and purposeful activities that affects the behaviour and characters of an individual. One of the problems associated with students is truancy which is a source of concern to the parents and school authorities. Eremier (2015) asserted that truancy is a student's deliberate irregular attendance at school. In the same vein, Igwe (2013) stated that truancy is an antisocial behaviour of students who stay away from school. Truancy occurs when a student is absent from school without permission

from parents and school. Oliha (2014) stated that truancy has been identified as a challenge in schools globally and in Nigeria in particular. In that submission, truancy does not only affect the students but also the communities (Tyler & Trinke, 2017).

Assessment and management of students who are at risk of truancy lacked the desired attention. Furthermore, the emotional disposition of truants show how they feel and react to their environment. A student who has an emotional challenge will vent his/her anger at the shortest provocation. The student also lacks interest in his studies during teaching and learning activities. Osarenren (2005) observed that the emotional disposition of an individual plays a significant role in his relationship. For example, an emotionally sad student does not have the courage to express himself politely among peers. In their views, Okwakpan and Okwakpan (2012) stressed that students tend to have a general feeling of rejection when confronted with negative actions from their environment.

Emotion is a state of feeling that results in changes that influence thought and behaviour. Gallaher (2013) posited that parents and teachers are expected to give adequate attention, love and care to encourage emotional stability among students hence, prevent truancy. Oliha and Audu (2010) studied rehabilitating emotional maladjustment problem among adolescents observed that, emotionally disturbed students act against school rules, family and society. Truants exhibit behaviour such as absenteeism, class disruptive activities while some tend to withdraw socially and isolate themselves. Truants lack positive communication skills such as knowing when to approach peers and joining them (Benneth, Mazerdle, Antirobus & Piquero, 2018).

Gender plays a significant role in the prevalence of truancy, among boys and girls who do not see the need for regular school attendance. Gesinde (2005) stated that boys at any level of education exhibit truancy more than the girls. In their submission, Nwankwo and Onyali's (2011) survey on truancy and dropping out of school revealed that in Nigeria, both gender exbibit similarities on truancy. Furthermore, the impact of gender is being examined in most academic issues, ranging from regular school attendance, academic achievement, school enrolment, truancy among others. There are equivocal reports on the prevalence of truancy behaviour among genders as Ehindero (2015) reported that at educational level, there are more truants among boys than girls. In a recent study by (Seidu, 2019) in Mozambique he discovered that more males exhibited truancy than females in secondary schools. It is evident therefore, that truancy is a problem that cuts across gender. Onoyase (2014) investigated the prevalence of gender among adolescents. He found that males are more likely to be truants than females. The findings that males

males were more likely to be truants could be based on cultural expectations. It could also be that truancy among boys may be tolerated than truancy in girls. Again, adolescent male and female students may engage in truancy because they feel the sense of belonging.

Various attempts have been made to address the problem of emotional disposition and truancy among gender. These include the use of personal social counselling strategies by counsellors. However, the researcher is concerned on the assessment and management of emotional disposition and gender parity in truancy among students. Consequently, the need to apply a therapeutic intervention that will reduce the prevalence of the challenges. The use of Bandura's (1997) social learning therapy and Beck's (1978) cognitive behaviour therapy for modifying the truants' behavioural tendency of students.

Statement of the Problem

It is worrisome to note that students face a lot of emotional and psychological problems arising from irregular school attendance. Also, lack of personal and interpersonal skills to cope with school work. However, many truants suffer from deprivation, isolation, rejection and unassertiveness, due to their inability to cope with social, cognitive and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the absence of peace may affect the society as the truants indulge in different vices such as bullying, juvenile delinquency, hooliganism among others. Assessment of students is critical in solving the problems of truancy in the schools (Babara, 2012). Other effects of truancy are dropout of school, less educated work force among youths who are the future leaders (Uhuegbu 2018). Consequently, these conditions have negative effects on the male and female students who view their actions as partners in progress. Truants are threats to the peace and progress of the society. This was affirmed by Omeje (2018) that truancy exerts a negative effect on community due to delinquency crime and other vices.
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Truancy is a deliberate, irrational, deviant and self-destructive behaviour with severe consequences on the individual and the society. Truancy has social and financial impact on the truant youth. They usually dropout of school which is inimical to acquiring values, skills in education.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to investigate the effect of social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies in ameliorating students' emotional disposition and truancy rate among selected senior secondary school students (boys/girls) in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1.   To what extent would there be any significant difference in the emotional disposition among participants exposed to the intervention strategies and those in the control group?

2.   What difference exists in the effectiveness of the intervention strategies on truancy due to gender in the three experimental conditions?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1.   There is no significant difference in the emotional disposition of participants exposed to the intervention strategies and control group.

2.   There is no significant difference in truancy rate between male and female participants in the three experimental conditions.

Area of Study

The research was carried out in Lagos State, South Western Nigeria. Numerous senior secondary school students are found in the area situated in the South West, Nigeria and bounded by Ogun State in the east and north. She adjourns the Atlantic Ocean. Lagos State is over 20 million people and heterogeneous. Comprised of 20 local government areas and six education districts densely populated with senior secondary school students. The prevalence of problems among senior secondary school students necessitated the choice of Lagos.

Methodology

The study adopted quasi-experimental pretest/posttest control group research design. Social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies were used to assess and manage truancy experienced by the senior secondary students. The absenteeism questionnaire was adopted by the researcher and used for data collection. The instrument comprised 10 items to obtain information from the students' bio-data. English and Mathematics were chosen due to students' lack of interest in both subjects. Truancy questionnaire (TQ) by Reid (2002) was adapted. The questions comprised 25 items based on educational activities and interpersonal relationships. The items enabled the researcher to obtain relevant data for the research hypotheses. The reliability coefficient was 0.62. The Psychological Distress Scale by Kessler and Moczeck (2003) t measure levels of negative emotional sates experienced by participants. The research instrument was adapted by the researcher to measure the emotional disposition of participants. The respondents indicated the degree to which they

agree with the items along the continuum ranging from 1. None of the time, 2. A little of the time, 3. Some of the time, 4. Most of the time. The test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.72 was established during the pilot study. The data collected were analysed and the hypotheses were tested with the use of mean, standard deviation and analysis of covariance statistics (ANCOVA) to ascertain if a significant difference occurred in the post-test scores of truancy experienced by the participants after intervention.

The participants in the control group were not given any treatment. All groups were given baseline assessment to isolate the unique features in the population of study. The three groups were pre-tested and post-tested in order to determine the effects of the experimental conditions. The population comprises all the students of senior secondary schools in Lagos State.

Specifically, participants comprised all identifiable students with truant behaviour. To determine the baseline, the absenteeism and truancy questionnaire (screening were administered to all available senior secondary two students (SS2) in the three selected schools to isolate students who are truants). Participants who scored 130 and above were randomly selected for the study, and identified as having high score due to being absent from the school and classes. The three schools were randomly assigned to the counselling strategies and the control group.

Administration of the Treatment/Instrument
All the instruments were administered in the three selected schools. The pre-assessment instruments were administered to 130 students who also completed the post-test assessment. The research was carried out within eight weeks. One week each was used for pre-test and post-test respectively while six weeks were spent on the actual experiments.

Pilot Study
Prior to the main study, a pilot study was conducted by the researcher to determine the psychometric properties of instrument. It was done to determine possible challenges which could arise before the commencement of the main study. 15 participants out of the isolated 582 students were randomly selected to participate. The pilot study assisted in the determination of the reliability of the questionnaire and problem that will emanate from data collection. The reliability and validity of the instrument was established. The stability of the instrument was determined over a period of two weeks in which the researcher administered all the instruments twice to the same set of participants.

Recruitment and Training of Research Assistants

Three research assistants were appointed by the researcher for effective data collection. The objectives of the study were explained to the research assistants and trained for two hours, twice a week on how to administer and score the instruments.

Treatment Procedure

The study was carried out in three phases.

Phase One: Pre-intervention Assessment

In the first week of contact with the participants, the research assistants administered the Truancy Questionnaire (TQ), Psychological Distress Scale (PDS) (screening) tools to all participants in the three experimental groups as pre-test before the commencement of treatment.

Phase Two: Intervention

The sampled groups for the study were randomly assigned to intervention and control groups. The two intervention groups met once a week for six weeks for a minimum of one hour for a session per week. The control group was on the waiting list.

Phase Three: Post Intervention Assessment

After the intervention sessions which lasted for six weeks, truancy questionnaire and psychological distress scale were re-administered to the participants in the three experimental groups. This was to find out if the experimental conditions provided a change in the dependent measures. The participants in social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies affirmed that they had an impressive reduction in emotional disposition and truancy rate due to gender, emanating from the result of the intervention.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of emotional disposition of participants in the three experimental conditions.

Table 1: Descriptive data on influence of experimental conditions on emotional disposition of participants

Experimental Group	Pre-Test			Post-Test			Mean
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Difference
Social Learning Therapy	46	31.61	3.60	46	12.41	1.71	-19.20
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy	44	29.00	6.66	44	20.55	7.03	-8.45
Control	40	31.88	6.01	40	31.18	4.17	-0.70
Total	**130**	**30.81**	**5.65**	**130**	**20.94**	**9.01**	**-9.87**

Note: The less the score the better the emotional disposition

Table 1 reveals that the pretest score ranges from 31.61for social learning group, 29.00 for the cognitive learning group and 31.88 for the control group. This table also shows that the social learning group had the highest improvement in the post-test with a mean difference of -19.20 followed by the cognitive learning group with a mean difference of -8.45, while the control group recorded the lowest mean difference of -0.70. However, to determine whether significant difference exists in emotional disposition among the participants in the experimental conditions, the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistic was done and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance on difference in the post test mean scores of emotional disposition of participants in the three experimental conditions

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F-cal	Sig. of F
Model	7681.916*	3	2560.639	115.410	000*
Intercept	958.700	1	958.700	43.210	000*
Covariance	140.244	1	140.244	6.321	013*
Experimental Group	7487.981	2	3743.990	168.745	000*
Error	2795.592	126	22.187		
Corrected Total	10477.508	129			

Significant, $P < 0.05$; F-critical at 0.05 (2, 126) = 3.07 < 168.745; F-critical at 0.05 (1, 126) = 3.92 < 6.321; F-critical at 0.05 (3, 126) = 2.68 < 115.410

Table 2 shows that a calculated F value of 168.745 resulted as the difference in emotional disposition due to the experimental conditions. This calculated F is significant since it is greater than the critical F-value of 3.07 given 2 and 126 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected because the intervention were effective in improving the emotional disposition of the participants. Based on the significant F, value obtained above, further analysis of data was carried out with the use of Fisher's protected t-test where in a pair wise comparison of group means was carried out to determine the trend of the difference among the three experimental groups in their emotional disposition. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Fisher's protected t-test on difference in participants' emotional disposition on learning

Groups	Social Learning (46)	Cogni tive Learning (44)	Control (40)
Social Learning	12.41 [a]	-4.47*	-9.43*
Cognitive Behaviour	-8.14	20.55 [a]	-5.34*
Control	-18.77	-10.63	31.18*

*Significant at 0.05; a = group mean are in diagonal, difference in interventions group means are below the diagonal while the protected t value are above the diagonal.

The results in Table 3 indicates that participants that were exposed to social learning therapy improve significantly more in emotional disposition than those exposed to cognitive therapy (T-cal = -4.47; df = 88; t-critical = 2.02; $P < 0.05$). Also, participants that received social learning therapy significantly improve in their emotional disposition than those in control group learning (t-cal = -9.43; df = 84; t-critical = 2.02, $P < 0.05$. Similarly, participants exposed to cognitive learning improve in their emotional disposition than the control group (t-cal = -5.34; df = 88; t =critical = 2.02, $P < 0.05$). Invariably, it can be concluded that SLT and CBT were effective in improving the emotional disposition of participants but the social learning was more effective.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the post test mean scores of disruptive behaviour in the three experimental conditions due to gender

Table 4: Descriptive data on the influence of gender on disruptive behaviour among participants due to experimental conditions

| Experimental Groups | Gender | Pre-Test | | | Post Test | | | Mean |
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Difference
Social Learning Training	Male	22	35.64	6.44	22	64.05	11.16	28.41
	Female	24	39.75	9.19	24	65.88	7.72	26.13
	Total	46	37.78	8.18	46	65.00	9.46	27.22
Cognitive Behaviour Training	Male	23	38.57	9.41	23	53.65	12.13	15.08
	Female	21	39.14	6.40	21	55.57	7.79	16.43
	Total	44	38.84	8.03	44	54.57	10.22	15.73
Control Group	Male	19	37.74	5.22	19	31.58	3.15	-6.16
	Female	21	35.67	5.66	21	33.24	3.13	-2.43
	Total	40	36.65	5.48	40	32.45	3.21	-4.20
Total	Male	64	37.31	7.36	64	50.67	16.47	13.36
	Female	66	38.26	7.46	66	52.21	15.22	13.95
	Total	130	37.79	7.39	130	51.45	15.81	13.66

The result of the descriptive data presented in Table 4 indicates that the pre-test mean value of disruptive behaviour for male participants were 35.64 for social learning therapy, 38.57 for cognitive behaviour therapy and 37.74 for the control group. Likewise, the pre-test mean score value for female participants were 39.75 for social learning therapy, 39.14 for cognitive behaviour therapy and 35.67 for the control group.

Also, at post-test male participants in social learning therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy and control group had mean score of 64.05, 53.65 and 31.58 respectively. Their female counterpart in social learning therapy, cognitive behaviour therapy and control group had mean score of 65.88, 55.57 and 33.24 respectively.

The table further indicates that the male and female in SLT had the highest reduction in disruptive behaviour with the average mean difference of 28.41 and 26.13 respectively. To determine whether the mean difference score in disruptive behaviour among the participants is significant, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistics was computed. It is evident that there was no interaction effect due to gender in the experimental condition. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of difference in the post test mean scores of disruptive behaviour among participants in the three experimental conditions due to gender

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F-cal	Sig. of F.
Model	23812.409 [a]	6	3968.735	57.977	.000*
Intercept	16242.001	1	16242.001	237.270	.000*
Covariance	392.566	1	392.566	5.735	.018*
Experimental group	23604.967	2	11802.483	172.415	.000*
Gender	130.611	1	130.611	1.908	.170 NS
Experimental/Gender	14.379	2	7.190	.105	.900 NS
Error	32232.223	129	32232.223		

*Significant, p < 0.05; NS = Not Significant; F-critical at 0.05 (2, 123) = 3.07 < 172.415; F-critical at 0.05 (1, 123) = 3.92 > 1.908; F-critical at 0.05(6, 123) = 2.17 < 57.977, F-critical at 0.05 (1, 123) = 3.92 < 5.735,

Table 5 shows that a calculated F-value of 172.415 resulted as the difference in disruptive behaviour among participants in the three experimental groups. The F-calculated value of 172.415 is statistically significant since it is greater than the critical F- value 3.07 given 2 and 123 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significant. This shows that the experimental condition significantly improved the rate of disruptive behaviour among participants. The result shows that a calculated F-value of 1.908 is lesser than the critical F-value of 3.92 given 1 and 123 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. There is no significant difference in the post-test mean scores of participants' disruptive behaviour due to gender. Hence, hypothesis 5 was accepted.

Discussion

The findings in hypothesis one stated that there was a significant difference in the post-test scores of emotional disposition of participants exposed to Social Learning Therapy (SLT) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and the control group. The reason that social learning therapy had more positive impact than the cognitive behaviour therapy could be ascribed to the contents of the intervention package. These include teaching the importance of good social skills which impacted on their mode of communication. Social learning therapy had significant as individuals or groups (model) serves as a reinforcement for their peers.

Likewise, the positive impact of cognitive behaviour therapy could also be attributed to the content of the intervention. These include teaching the guidelines of changing negative self-talk to positive alternative ideas which influenced emotional disposition of the

students. Also, the therapy changed their negative perception about schooling to maintaining regular school attendance behaviour (Ibili, 2008).

The findings were supported by Corey (2008) who posited that Social Learning Therapy (SLT) has significant effect on improving emotional engagement (emotions and values in preventing truancy) when compared with their control group counterparts. Kim and Page (2013) were also in agreement with the findings that behavioural engagement (academics and extra-curricular activities) improved students' emotional problems.

Hypothesis two stated that there is no significant difference in the post-test scores of truancy rate of male and female participants exposed to Social Learning Therapy (SLT), Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and the control group. The reason could be attributed to non-existence of interaction effect between male and female on truancy rate in the three experimental conditions. The findings of this study is in contrast with Van Brand (2014) study on gender and school attendance behaviour among secondary school students. The study showed that boys indulge in truancy more than girls as they engage in fighting and bullying. The findings of this study again contradicted the findings of Robinson and Rogstad's (2012) which shows that girls exbibit truancy in the first few years of secondary school as they role play the boys who are their models. Monrad's study on gender revealed that in the United States, male students constitute 8% less likely to graduate than the female with a 14% gap between the African American students.

The findings of this study agreed with Oluremi (2013) who revealed that no significant difference existed in the truancy manifestation between male and female. Therefore, it is evident that gender does not determine irregular school attendance behaviour such as truancy. In the intervention groups, there was no particular trend in terms of gender differences. There was no indication that any of the intervention conditions appeared more effective for either of the gender. The two counselling therapies had equal effect on both boys and girls. The study showed that there is no difference in the truancy rate of participants that were exposed to experimental conditions due to gender. Also, no interaction effect due to gender in the study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies are effective. Regular attendance at school by students is needed to facilitate learning. Students who take their school work seriously, eventually emerged with good grades in their examinations.

Again, the result revealed that if proper counselling is given to students through social learning and cognitive behaviour therapies, thus regular school attendance behaviour will be enhanced. Also, emotional disposition and truancy rate among the students will be reduced. If the youths are not educated, they will end up being used as thugs to destroy the amenities meant for citizens.

Recommendations
1. School counsellors and education administrators can utilise programmes about regular school attendance to organise symposia, seminars and workshops for senior secondary school students to acquire problem-solving skills, social skills and adequate thought process.
2. The government should encourage parents through mass-media to actively participate in the education of their children, hence reduce negative behaviour among adolescents.
3. School counsellors should intensify their efforts in the use of social learning therapy and cognitive behaviour therapy to ameliorate truancy and its attendant maladaptive behaviour among students.

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