



Effects of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (Rebt) on Curbing Examination Malpractice Behaviour among Public Secondary School Students in Calabar Municipality

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Abstract

Examination malpractice is a current trend in the educational system today. This trend has negative implications on the educational system. In search for a solution to the problem, the researcher investigated the effect of REBT in curbing examination malpractice behaviour among secondary school students in Calabar Municipality area of Cross River State. The research design adopted for this study was the pretest-posttest control group experimental design. The sample consisted of 80 senior secondary school students purposively selected for the study. The Instrument used for data collection was the Student Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (SEMQ). The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were established. Two research questions were answered and two hypotheses were tested at .05 significance level. The results showed that REBT had a significant effect on the two variables (wrong values and desire for certificates) of examination malpractice tested, with p. values of .008 and .03 respectively. It was recommended that REBT be used in treating examination malpractice behaviour among secondary school students. Suggestions for further research were made. The conclusion from this study was that there was a significant effect of REBT in curbing examination malpractice behaviour.

Keywords: Examination Malpractice, REBT, Wrong Values, Desire for Certificates.

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INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice is currently a trend in the educational system the world over and Nigeria seems to be one of the most affected countries. This trend is considered as being injurious to the educational system. It is also considered as one of the various reasons for the decline in the quality of education in Nigeria. This is due to the fact that it results in a failure in the evaluation of the educational system, huge economic wastes, poor productivity in terms of the quality of output and wrong decision making in the educational system. It is however a behaviour that has been learned and it is the belief of the researcher that this behaviour can be unlearned and behaviours that support the growth of education learned in its place. The researcher, based on this belief, applied a cognitive behavioural therapy; Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) by Albert Ellis in an attempt to treat Examination malpractice behaviour.

REBT is a cognitive behavioural therapy that seeks to change maladaptive behaviours by confronting and disputing irrational beliefs that are perceived as being at the root of maladaptive behaviours. It is based on the ABC principle which states that; the response of individuals to events is not based on the activating event (A) but on the belief (B) of the individual concerning the event which in turn leads to a consequence (C). It also deals with behaviours that proceed from wrong values and poor socialization. According to Michler (2004) behaviour is determined by belief system, hence changing irrational beliefs will lead to change of the associated behaviour. Examination malpractice behaviour is believed to result from faulty beliefs and poor socialization process. Two major factors responsible for examination malpractice behaviour include; wrong value orientation and desire for certificates instead of knowledge. These factors are addressed in this study. The irrational beliefs underlying these factors are being targeted in this study.

Examination malpractice refers to actions carried out by persons involved in setting, typing, administering, scoring and recording examinations, before, during or after the examination that leads to falsification of scores derived from the examination process or grants undue advantage to one or some examinees over others. In 2012 Nigeria ranked 1st position for examination malpractice in the world examination malpractice index (VNTI, 2012). However examination malpractice is not limited to Nigeria alone, cases of examination malpractice have been reported in Britain, India, South Korea and China (Fagbemi in Olatoye, 2004; Ogunji, 2011).

There have been concerted efforts towards curbing examination malpractice the world over. According to Abdullahi (2009) some countries have been said to have imposed a death penalty for examination malpractice. In Nigeria examination malpractice is a criminal offence punishable by law according to Decree no. 33 of 1999. Efforts by examination bodies such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC) to curb examination malpractice include, public enlightenment campaigns, punitive actions on culprits etc. The growth in the trend of examination malpractice cases from 72, 516 in WAEC in 1994 to 101, 398 in 2012, (Ibikunle&Oyewole 2011; www.myschoolgist.com; 2012) reveals that this efforts are not sufficient in curbing the problem of examination malpractice. From the literature reviewed research efforts have focused on identifying causes and possible solutions to examination malpractice (Abdullahi, 2009; Asinya, 2012; Olatoye 2004). There have however been limited efforts at attempting to actually solve the problem of examination malpractice by applying the suggested solutions. Wrong value orientation and desire for certificates are among the key causes

of examination malpractice identified by researchers (Emaikwu, 2012; Ibikunle & Oyewole, 2011). Gbenda (2008) linked the problem of examination malpractice to irrational beliefs acquired by students through the process of socialization. REBT will be used to change the irrational beliefs responsible for examination malpractice behaviour.

Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, Saunders, Galloway and Craig (2004) asserted that REBT has a significantly positive effect on changing irrational beliefs in adolescents and children. REBT has been experimentally proven to be effective for changing irrational beliefs and associated behaviours, changing wrong values and curbing examination malpractice behaviour. Omoegun (2003) applied REBT and SQ3R in changing attitude towards examination malpractice on a sample of 300 secondary school students (150 males and 150 females) randomly selected from a total population of all secondary school students in Lagos mainland Local Education District. The research design was the pretest – posttest quasi experimental design. Data was collected using the Attitude towards Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (ATEMQ). Data collected was analyzed using students t-test statistical procedure. Results showed that REBT was effective in changing students attitude towards examination malpractice and hence examination malpractice behaviour.

A study was carried out by Flak (1998) to determine The Efficacy of Group Counselling Interventions Employing Short term Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in Altering Beliefs, Values, Attitudes and Behaviours of at Risk Adolescents. The design for this study was a pretest posttest control group experimental design. The sample included 48 adolescents of age 14 – 18 years. The students were randomly assigned to 3 groups according to gender. Instruments for data collection included the Idea inventory and the school social behaviour rating scales, observation was a major method of data collection. The procedure for data analysis was a factorial ANOVA. The results showed that group counselling using REBT was effective in altering wrong beliefs, wrong values, attitudes and behaviour.

Greenfield (2011) carried out a study to determine the effect of REBT on initiating and maintaining regular exercise among college age men, he reported that REBT helped the men modify their beliefs about exercise and by so doing improved their motivation to routinely engage in exercise. This study demonstrated that when an individual's belief about a thing is changed his behaviour concerning the thing is also changed. Wilde (1999) also found that Rational Emotive Education was effective in lowering irrational beliefs in 4th grade students. A follow up study in 1999 by Wilde showed that increase in rational thinking can be maintained for four years (Wilde, 1999).

Students in schools in Nigeria hold the irrational belief that having a certificate is more important than acquiring knowledge, they believe that a certificate is the answer to their quest for a job and livelihood. There is so much emphasis on acquiring a certificate, whether the individual is able to defend the certificate or not. Oniye and Olawaye (2008) and Ibikunle and Oyewole (2011) cited over reliance on certificates and examination performance and societal preference for paper qualifications over knowledge as major causes of examination malpractice while Asinya (2012) and Emaikwu (2012) listed undue emphasis on paper qualifications as a major cause for examination malpractice. This erroneous belief that a certificate is to be acquired by hook or by crook while the acquisition of knowledge is to be ignored leads students to engage in examination malpractice in order to acquire certificates that they cannot defend. This irrational belief must be changed if examination malpractice must be curbed.

In a study by Faroukhzad (n.d) to find out the relationship between irrational beliefs and adjustment and to study the effect of REBT on adjustment and reducing irrational beliefs among

adolescent girls; a sample of 60 girls were randomly selected from a high school in area 2 of Tehran and randomly assigned into 3 groups; experimental, and control group. The Jones Irrational Belief Questionnaire formulated in 1968 and Bell adjustment Inventory formulated in 1961 were administered as pretest. The experimental group participated in 10 sessions of REBT (one session a week), the placebo group underwent 10 sessions of general discussions simultaneously and at the end of the treatment period a post test was administered and analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient and the ANCOVA statistics. Results showed that REBT reduces irrational beliefs and improves emotional and social adjustment among adolescent girls.

In another study by Turner and Barker (2015) examining the effect of intensive REBT on irrational beliefs of Blue chip professionals undergoing redundancy; adopting a repeated measures single group intervention design so that changes in irrational beliefs could be assessed over the course of the REBT programme. Results indicated that significant reductions in total irrational beliefs, other depreciation, need for achievements and demand for fairness from pretest to posttest phases. Social validation data indicated perceived psychological and performance benefits.

A study on the effects of School counsellor's cognitive behavioural consultation on irrational and efficacy beliefs of elementary school teachers by Warren and Gerler (2014) was reviewed. The study had a sample of 35 teachers and employed the 'modified posttest, quasi experimental design'. Four instruments – the Irrational Beliefs Inventory (IBI), the General Self Efficacy Scale (GSES), the Teachers' Irrational Beliefs Scale (TIBS) and the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) were utilized for the study and data generated analyzed using the ANOVA statistics. The result of the study showed that cognitive behavioural consultation was useful in changing irrational and efficacy beliefs, directly promoting mental health and indirectly fostering students' success. From the foregoing literature REBT should be effective in changing the irrational belief that acquiring a certificate is more important than learning and the end justifies the means.

The researcher embarked on this study due to a growing concern for the decline of educational standards in Nigeria. Particular concern was due to a firsthand witness of examination malpractice among teachers in training. Secondary school students were chosen for this study because the foundation for examination malpractice is believed to be laid and nurtured in Secondary schools. Students are also the focal point in examination malpractice without which examination malpractice cannot thrive. Applying REBT on secondary school student is believed to be an efficient method for curbing examination malpractice behaviour in our educational institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Examination malpractice seems to be eating deeper and deeper into the fabric of the educational system and it purports imminent danger for the educational system. There is doubt that the current attempts at curbing examination malpractice are sufficient. This is due to the fact that the problem persists in our system. The methods employed so far have been more of punitive and curative than preventive. Literature review revealed that research efforts have been largely focused on identifying the causes and possible solutions to examination malpractice. This study adopts a preventive approach in attempting to curb examination malpractice behaviour by seeking to tackle two of the causes of examination malpractice behaviour (wrong value orientation and irrational desire for and seeking certificates instead of seeking to acquire

knowledge) identified from research. REBT was used in an attempt to curb examination malpractice behaviour.

Scope of the study

The study focuses on senior secondary school students in Calabar municipal area only. The content scope was limited to two causes of examination malpractice, wrong value orientation and desire for certificates. The wrong values tackled were lack of value for hard work, lack of integrity and having an external Locus of control.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- What is the effect of REBT on wrong value scores of students?
- What is the effect of REBT on desire for certificate scores of students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 significance level:

- There is no significant difference in the effect of REBT on wrong value scores of the experimental and control group.
- There is no significant difference in the effect of REBT on desire for certificate scores of the experimental and the control group.

METHODS

The design employed in this study was the pre-test – post-test control group experimental design. The experimental group was pretested, treated and then post tested, while the control group was pretested, post-tested, and given a placebo treatment consisting of a summary of the treatment after the post-test.

The sample for the study included 80 senior secondary school students chosen from 2 secondary schools in Calabar municipality through a purposive sampling technique. This was due to the fact that the researcher sought to include only students who were likely to engage in examination malpractice in the study. The pre-test was administered and students who scored highest on the pre-test were purposively chosen for the study. High pre-test scores was an indication of a positive disposition towards examination malpractice. The instrument used for data generation was the Students Examination malpractice Questionnaire. The content validity of the instrument was ascertained by five experts in the field of research and evaluation, and educational psychology, their ratings was used to establish the logical validity index at 73.6%. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha statistical procedure. The values were .78 for wrong values and .82 for desire for certificates. An overall reliability of .83 was obtained. Data obtained was analysed using the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) statistical tool

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the effect of REBT on wrong values scores of students?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of wrong values scores

Group	Pretest			Posttest		
	Total Scores	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Scores	Mean	Standard Dev.
Experimental	308	15.40	2.48	227	11.35	2.70
Control	277	13.85	2.80	277	13.85	2.54

REBT has a positive effect on wrong values. This can be seen from table 1. The scores of the experimental group drop from 308 to 227 after the treatment with REBT. This change in Scores could be ascribed to the treatment. A further look at the scores of the control group goes to buttress this point. The control group scores did not change at the post-test. They maintain the score of 277 at pre-test and post-test. The mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group (pre-test post-test mean difference) is 4.05 while for the control group the mean difference is 0. Hence REBT has a positive effect on wrong values.

Research Question 2

What is the effect of REBT on desire for certificate scores of students?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for desire for certificates scores

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		
	Total Scores	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Scores	Mean	Standard Dev.
Experimental	322	16.1	2.95	235	11.75	3.37
Control	304	15.2	2.34	277	13.85	2.66

REBT can be said to have had a positive effect on the student's irrational desire for certificates. Student selected for this study valued certificates more than knowledge, predisposing them to examination malpractice. After treatment with REBT there is a change in their attitude, there is a reduction in their irrational desire for certificates. This can be gleaned from the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents. At the post-test there is a reduction in scores for both experimental and control groups, with the experimental group having a pre-test post-test mean difference of 4.35 and the control group having a pre-test post-test mean difference of 1.35. The greater difference in the scores of the experimental group shown in table 6, could be attributed to treatment with REBT. Hence there is a positive effect of REBT on desire for certificates.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the experimental and the control group on the effect of REBT on wrong values scores of students. This hypothesis is being tested at .05 alpha level with degree of freedom of 2, 38.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the effect of REBT on wrong values scores

Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Experimental	11.35	2.78	20
Control	13.85	2.60	20
Total	12.60	2.94	40

Source: SPSS output

Table 10 displays the descriptive statistics of the effect of REBT on wrong values. The statistics reveal a mean of 11.350 and a standard deviation of 2.8 for the experimental group and a mean of 13.850 and a standard deviation of 2.9 for the control group. Hence there is a mean difference of 2.5 between the experimental and the control group.

Table 4: ANCOVA Results for the effect of REBT on wrong values

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	62.614	2	31.307	4.212	.022	.185
Intercept	198.271	1	198.271	26.678	.000	.419
Pretest	.114	1	.114	.015	.902	.000
Group	59.139	1	59.139	7.957	.008*	.117
Error	274.986	37	7.432			
Total	6688.000	40				
Corrected Total	337.600	39				

- a. R Squared = .185(Adjusted R Squared = .141) Significant at .05 df = 2, 38 P=.008Source: SPSS output

A one - way ANCOVA was carried out to test the mean difference between the experimental and the control group on the effect of REBT on wrong values. Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure was used to control for type 1 error across the pair wise comparisons. The ANCOVA was significant at $F(2, 38) = 7.957, p = .008, p < .05$. We reject the null hypothesis. Hence there is a significant mean difference between the experimental and the control group on wrong values at the end of treatment. The experimental group who received treatment with REBT had significantly lower wrong values scores than the control group who received no treatment at the posttest. Hence there is a significant effect of REBT on wrong values.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the experimental and the control group on the effect of REBT on scores of desire for certificates. This hypothesis was tested at .05 alpha level and the degree of freedom is 2, 38.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for the effect of REBT on the desire for certificates

Group	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Experimental	11.75	3.26	20
Control	13.85	2.72	20
Total	12.80	3.15	40

Source: SPSS output

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics for the effect of REBT on desire for certificates. From table 5, the experimental group has a mean of 11.75 and a standard deviation of 3.26, and the control group has a mean of 13.850 and a standard deviation of 2.72. There is a mean difference of 2.1.

Table 6: ANCOVA Results for the effect of REBT on the desire for certificates

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
Corrected Model	46.507	2	23.254	2.531	.093	.120
Intercept	144.841	1	144.841	15.77	.000	.299
Pretest	2.407	1	2.407	.26	.61	.007
Group	46.329	1	46.329	5.04	.03*	.120
Error	339.893	37	9.189			
Total	6940.000	40				
Corrected Error	386.400	39				

a. R Squared = .120 (Adjusted R Squared = .073) Significant at .05df= 2, 38 P=.03

Source: SPSS output

A One-Way ANCOVA was carried out to test the mean difference between the experimental and the control group on the desire for certificates. Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure was used to control for type 1 error across the pair wise comparisons. The ANCOVA was significant at $F(2, 38) = 5.04, p = .03, p < .05$. Hence we reject the null hypothesis.

There is a significant difference between the experimental and the control group at posttest on scores for desire for certificates. The experimental group who received a treatment of REBT had significantly lower mean scores for desire for certificates than the control group at the end of the experiment. Hence there is a significant effect of REBT on desire for certificates.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to find the effect of REBT in changing examination malpractice behaviour among secondary school students in Calabar Municipality in Cross River State by treating two variables which were identified by research as major causes of examination malpractice behavior. The design employed in the study was the pretest posttest control group experimental design. Findings were made from Research Question 1, Hypothesis 1 that REBT has a significant effect on wrong value scores of students. Hence REBT is effective in changing wrong values. This finding is in line with the assertion of Gbenda (2008), Oniyama & Amroma and Denga & Denga cited in Gbenda (2008) that REBT can lead to a radical transformation of values and internalization of new values. It also agrees with the finding of Flak (1998) that REBT is effective in altering wrong beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours. The similarity in the results in this study with that of Flak (1998) may be hinged on the fact that both studies were carried out

among adolescents and both studies adopted the same design. The study is also in line with the study of Greenfield (2011) which found REBT efficient in changing wrong values and irrational beliefs associated with lack of motivation to routinely engage in exercise.

Adolescence is a stage where major values and identity are formed. It is quite easier to employ systematic strategies in changing irrational beliefs and wrong values during adolescence than in later stages of life. When the adolescents are made to understand why the values they have upheld so far are wrong with sufficient evidences they are bound to make relevant changes. When the wrong values such as lack of value for hard work, lack of integrity and an external locus of control are changed, students will value hard work and will work hard in school to acquire knowledge; they will have integrity and refuse to participate in the shameful act of examination malpractice. Acquiring an internal locus of control means adolescents will take responsibility and will act in order to avoid failure. This will definitely lead to a change in examination malpractice behaviour. REBT can therefore be applied among secondary school students to change previously internalized wrong values responsible for examination malpractice and other maladjusted behaviours.

Research Question 2, Hypothesis 2, showed that REBT has a significant positive effect on desire for certificates (irrational desire for and preference for the possession of certificates over the internalization of knowledge as the goal of education). The findings based on this hypothesis, supports the findings of Turner and Baker (2015) and Warren and Gerler (2014) that REBT is effective in changing irrational beliefs underlying problem behaviours and hence changing problem behaviours. The finding is also in line with the finding by Gonzalez et al. (2004) that REBT is effective in changing irrational beliefs and that of Wilde (1999) that REBT is effective in increasing and maintaining rational thinking over a period of four years. It confirms the findings by Faroukhzad (n.d.) that REBT reduces irrational beliefs and also improves emotional and social adjustment among adolescent girls. Interestingly, the result of this study also aligns positively with the result of the study by Omoegun (2003) that REBT is effective in changing attitude towards examination malpractice and hence examination malpractice behaviour. The study by Omoegun (2003) though carried out in a different geopolitical zone in Nigeria employed the same design and similar statistical procedures with the present study. REBT as a solution to Examination malpractice should therefore be a choice procedure in Nigeria.

The fact that REBT is able to change the disposition of students from a preference and desire for certificates over knowledge to a higher preference for knowledge and learning and also change wrong values that hamper best practices in education is a welcome discovery. It is also a step forward in the fight against examination malpractice. If students learn the value for knowledge they are likely to begin to pursue knowledge as opposed to pursuing certificates through the means of examination malpractice. When students acquire integrity, value for hard work and an internal locus of control they are likely to abandon examination malpractice for hard work. This should lead to a rise in the standard of education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- In line with findings from research question 1, hypothesis 1, it is recommended that REBT should be applied in changing wrong values such as laziness, lack of integrity, external locus of control etc., responsible for examination malpractice among students.

REBT should also be applied in changing wrong values underlying other maladjusted behaviours among learners.

- In line with the findings from research question 2 and hypothesis 2, it is recommended that REBT should be applied in changing irrational beliefs and irrational thoughts that underlie problem behaviours among students.
- REBT can also be applied to other groups of individuals like the parents, school principals, examination supervisors and even teachers who in one way or the other partake in examination malpractice behaviours to change their belief system to more positive beliefs and values that support hard work and integrity.

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