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Experienced and Less Experienced Counsellors' Perception of the Counselling Strategies for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The study ascertained counsellors' perceptions of experienced and less experienced counsellors on the counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study and was tested at .05 level of confidence. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Experienced and less experienced counsellor variables was adopted as the respondents. The population of the study was 105 Guidance Counsellors currently serving in the 291 government owned secondary schools in Enugu State. Out of 105 copies of questionnaire developed by the researcher and distributed, 96 copies were returned signifying 91.43%. Of these counsellors', 53 was experienced counsellors while 43 were less experienced counsellors. The 96 copies was used to collect the data for the study using self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher called Changing Environment Scale (CES). The instrument was face validated by experts Cronbach Alpha Reliability estimate was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. Data collected for this study was analyzed using mean, grand mean and standard deviation, to answer the two research questions. The hypotheses was tested using t-test statistic at .05 level of confidence. The study found that Experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy and Systematic Desensitization as counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. Thus, no significant difference was found between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and Systematic Desensitization as counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. Hence, recommendations and suggestions for further studies were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Experienced and Less Experienced Counsellors

INTRODUCTION

The general scarcity of professional Guidance Counsellors has left most secondary schools unable to effectively enhance self-esteem in Guidance and Counselling programme among secondary school students as recommended by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in her National Policy of Education [1]. According to the guidance and counselling Division of the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB) Enugu 2015, there are presently 105 guidance counsellors serving in the 291 government owned secondary schools of Enugu State [2]. Of these,

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statistics shows that 53 are guidance while 43 teachers counsellors. This means that there are only 59 experienced guidance counsellors in the 291 Enugu State owned secondary schools. More to the above fact is buttressed by [3] who found that that most secondary schools have no professional guidance and counsellors in Enugu State. Researches carried by [4], found that due to lack of experienced counsellors guidance and counselling programmes are not well implemented in Schools. [5] in a related study found among others that hardly can counsellors satisfy the needs of their students since their number is inadequate. He found that counsellors with no little or no experience are unable to apply counselling strategies during counselling session. He also found out that Workshop, seminars and conferences which would have been organized for school counsellors to update them with the new skills are frustrated by government and funds are not made available for such conferences. Furthermore, some of the already existing counselling strategies which guidance counsellors are expected to choose from which are of interest to the researcher are rational emotive behavioural therapy and systematic desensitization method to mention but a few. The counsellors' choice depends on their perception of some of the available counselling strategies. These counsellors acquired their knowledge of these counselling strategies during their training and improve on them as they utilize them in the one-to-one relationship assisting clients to resolve the problems they meet in their growth process. The major problem most of the inexperienced counsellors faced in their day to day activities while they execute their responsibilities is the problem of low-self-esteem.

Low self-esteem is seen as having some adverse effects on secondary school students both in short and long term durations. Students with self-esteem problems are usually easily frustrated, give up easily, make negative statements about themselves and become anxious when faced with challenges, chances are that they could easily yield to some vices. Fear of failure and that of being rejected by peers could precipitate unpopular behaviours like smoking, fighting, illicit sex and they in turn associate with low self-esteem. Can deploying rational emotive behavioural therapy and systematic desensitization as a strategy by counsellors be of help in this study? For instance, Rational Emotive Therapy is one of the counselling strategies perceived by experienced counsellors for enhancing self esteem among secondary school students. It as formulated by Ellis in 195 [6]. Using this therapy [6] believes that behaviour learned can be unlearned. This therapy as perceived by experienced counsellors is based on, *changing students' perception towards self-esteem, giving information to students on the evils of negative self-talk, encouraging students to appreciate what one is capable of doing, developing one's potentials positively, helping students to develop good sense of values, ability to accept one's limitations and encouraging the use of positive statements to change negative thoughts, about self.* [7] held that Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a strategy is an instrument for assisting students to develop good sense of value. He also found that it is a useful tool for encouraging students to use positive statements in place of negative thoughts.

Consequently, [6], remarked the importance of students drawing from their own resources and develop skills that can change destructive patterns of behaviour. At the same time students receive information on how to change thoughts and expectations through counselling. Similarly the cognitive therapy uses the power of the mind to influence behaviour. It is based on the theory that previous experiences can adversely affect self-perception, condition, attitude, emotions and ability to deal with certain change situations [6]. Counselling in this respect will function through helping the client to identify, question and change self-degenerating thoughts, thus altering habitual response and behaviour to a certain extent. The question begging for an answer is: "Will guidance counsellors through their perception find Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy an appropriate counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State? Another viable strategy that can be utilized by experienced counsellors are systematic desensitization therapy that is also known as graduated exposure therapy. Later on systematic desensitization was developed by Wolpe in 1958 as a technique in which relaxation training, anxiety hierarchy (listing anxiety-producing triggers from most to least), and exposure are used to reduce one's sensitivity to situations he or she dreads. This strategy helps to identify the source of anxiety in the client with the counsellor assisting them to learn relaxation or coping technique. [8], stated that by learning and practicing relaxation techniques in systematic desensitization, the level of one's anxiety and panic attacks will reduce. The goal of this process is for the adolescent to learn how to overcome fear, that is, the frightening situation. This theory is based on, *asking secondary school students to try and identify why they feel inferior to their peers, helping secondary school students on how to adopt a coping method in any circumstance, teaching secondary school students the ways to change expectations techniques using relaxation, teaching secondary school students to accept any flaws in their physical appearance as a natural endowment that makes one peculiar* [9]. This topic however is simply directing the responsibility of guiding and counselling these young people out of the depleting state of vulnerability they find themselves to counsellors in schools as re-echoed in the Federal Government in her National Policy on Education (2013) [1]. This exercise is restricted to secondary schools in Enugu State. The

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counsellors as it is, operate in schools which is the 'gateway', where almost every child is expected to pass through in order to become respectable citizens in the society. The question begging for an answer is, "will guidance counsellors find systematic desensitization and Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as appropriate counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State? It is against this background that the study sought to determine the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors on the counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu.

Statement of Problems

For sometimes now, parents the mass media and the general public have complained of the waning self-esteem of secondary school students. From observation, current secondary school students do not assert themselves, they have no confidence in themselves and they lack focus in whatever they do. Self-esteem is an important trait in self-development and very critical in the development of youths. When self-esteem is not developed, the victim suffers from inferiority complex and this affects adversely his/her academic performance and interpersonal relationship with his/her peers and significant others. The current technology driven society, where ICT dictates the pace of development of a nation, Nigeria cannot but have assertive, confident and focused students to enhance its national development. The worries of all and sundry is that if the school system is not equipped with human resources to impart the culture of self-esteem in students, the nation will in no distant time be at risk. The argument has been that guidance counsellors have not come to grip on the strategies that enhance self-esteem among secondary school students. In this regard, two schools of thought emerged. One school, argued that guidance counsellors are well at home with the strategies for enhancing self-esteem but the problem is that they are handicapped by the high dearth of guidance counsellors in schools. The other school has argued that less experienced counsellors have vague perception of strategies that enhance self-esteem among secondary school students as their employees (P.P.S.M.B, Enugu) have only organized two workshops since the inception of guidance and counselling in schools in 1982. This group has argued strongly that it is because of this ambiguous perception of strategies that makes it difficult for them to inculcate self-esteem traits in students. Consequently, students leave secondary schools with low self-esteem of themselves because of lack of experienced counsellors. This, according to this group fits into the adage that you do not give what you do not have. Most students aspire to excel in their academic pursuit but this might become an illusion unless it is equally nursed and nurtured by experienced counsellors who have a clear cut perception of strategies that enhance self-esteem. It is against this background that this study is being undertaken. It is against this background that the study sought to determine the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors on the counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors on the counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu. Specifically the study aims at;

1. Ascertaining the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors' on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
2. Find out the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors' on systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study.

1. How do experienced and less experienced counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?
2. How do experienced and less experienced counsellors perceive systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Hypothesis 1

One hypothesis guided the study and was tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

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Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive the survey research design. The area of the study was Enugu State, Nigeria. The population for this study comprised 105 practicing guidance counsellors in all the 291 government owned secondary schools in the 6 Education Zones of Enugu State. Of these 53 were experienced counsellors while 43 were less experienced counsellors. The population is small so no sampling was done. The instrument used for data collection was a 11 items questionnaire called Counselling Strategies Scale (CSS). The instrument had a 4-point response scale with response category of Strongly Agree (SA)---4 points; Agree(A)-----3 points; Disagree (D)--- -2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD)—1 point. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from Guidance and counselling Department and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State university of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate and it yielded a reliability coefficient of .73. The study was carried out in all the 291 secondary schools in Enugu State. One hundred and five copies of the questionnaire were distributed but ninety-six copies were retrieved from the respondents representing 91.43 percent return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean with standard deviation. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agreed while any mean below 2.50 was regarded as Disagreed. The one null hypothesis were tested at .05 level of significance using t-test statistic. If the calculated t-value was less than the critical table value of ± 1.96 for the required degree of freedom of 94, the null hypothesis was not rejected but if the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical, t-value, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the results of the study according to the research question and hypothesis that guided the study. The data analyzed were presented in Tables 1- 4.

Research Question 1: How do experienced and less experienced counsellors perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean Perception Scores (\bar{X}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Experienced and Less experienced Counsellors perception of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

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S/N	Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students are based on:	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Changing student's perception Towards self-esteem	30	39	21	6	2.97	0.89	Agree
2	Giving Information to students on the evils of negative self-talk	42	39	12	3	3.25	0.79	Agree
3	Encouraging students to appreciate what one is capable of doing	51	33	12	0	3.41	0.70	Agree
4	Developing one's potentials positively	06	36	54	-	1.50	0.61	Disagree
5	Helping students to develop good sense of values	36	39	9	12	3.03	0.99	Agree
6	The ability to accept one's limitations	9	12	18	57	1.71	1.01	Disagree
7	Encouraging the use of positive statement to change negative thoughts about self	57	30	9	0	3.50	0.66	Agree
Grand Mean						2.77		Agree

The data in Table 1 shows that of the 7 items on experienced and less experienced counsellors' perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The respondents affirmed that they perceive 5 of the items (1, 2, 3, 5 and 7) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State as they recorded mean scores of 2.97, 3.25, 3.41, 3.03 and 3.50. These mean are above the cut-off point of 2.50. They however disagreed with 2 of the items (4 and 6) with a mean score of (1.50 and 1.71). Their recorded standard deviation is small showing variability of the respondents score. This is indicative that there is homogeneity in their responses for the items raised. Table 1 further indicated that the respondents recorded a grand mean of 2.77 which is well above the cut-off point of 2.50. Thus, the answer to research question 1 is that experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Research Question 2: How do experienced and less experienced counsellors perceive systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean Perception Scores(\bar{X}) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Experienced and Less experienced Counsellors perception of Systematic Desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State

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S/N	Systematic Desensitization as a strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students are based on:	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
		4	3	2	1			
8	Asking the secondary school students to try and identify why they feel inferior among their peers	15	57	12	12	2.78	0.86	Agree
9	Helping secondary school students to adopt a coping method in any Circumstance especially that of overcoming	2	17	23	54	1.65	0.84	Disagree
10	Teaching secondary school students some of the ways to change expectation techniques using relaxation	45	49	1	1	3.43	0.58	Agree
11	Teaching secondary school students to accept any flaws in their physical appearance as a natural endowment that makes one peculiar	27	54	9	6	3.06	0.61	Agree
Grand Mean						2.73		Agree

The data in Table 2 shows that of the 4 items on experienced and less experienced counsellors' perception on systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The respondents affirmed that 3 of the items (8, 9 and 11) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State as they recorded mean scores of 2.78, 3.43 and 3.06. These mean are above the cut-off point of 2.50. They however disagreed with 1 of the items (10) with a mean score of (1.65). Their recorded standard deviation is small showing variability of the respondents score. This is indicative that there is homogeneity in their responses for the items raised. Table 2 further indicated that the respondents recorded a grand mean of 2.73 which is well above the cut-off point of 2.50. Thus, the answer to research question 2 is that experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of the Difference between the (\bar{X}) Mean Scores of Experienced and Less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

STATUS	N	\bar{X}	S ²	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Experienced Guidance Counsellor							
	53	2.77	0.59	94	1.01	± 1.96	NS Do not reject Ho ₁
Less Experienced Guidance Counsellor							
	43	1.77					
Total	96	4.54					

Significant at P < .05, df = 94, critical t-value = ± 1.96

The t-test analysis in table 3 above shows that the calculated t- value is 1.01 while the critical t-value is ± 1.96 at .05 level of confidence. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t- value. Thus, going by the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents data, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Systematic Desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the Difference between the (\bar{X}) Mean Scores of Experienced and Less experienced counsellors perception on Systematic Desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

STATUS	N	\bar{X}	S ²	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Experienced Guidance Counsellor							
	53	2.73	0.59	94	0.31	± 1.96	NS Do not reject Ho ₂
Less Experienced Guidance Counsellor							
	43	2.71					
Total	96	5.44					

Significant at P < .05, df = 94, critical t-value = ± 1.96

The t-test analysis in table 4 above shows that the calculated t- value is 0.31 while the critical t-value is ± 1.96 at .05 level of confidence. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t- value. Thus, going by the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents data, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Systematic Desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Discussion of the Findings

The first research question sought to ascertain the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors' on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The result in Table 1 showed that experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The finding is in line with those of [7] who held that Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a strategy is an instrument for assisting students to develop good sense of value. He also found that it is a useful tool for encouraging students to use positive statements in place of negative thoughts. The

second research question sought to find out the perception of experienced and less experienced counsellors' on systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The result in Table 2 showed that experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The finding is consistent with those of [8] who found that by learning and practicing relaxation techniques in systematic desensitization, the level of one's anxiety and panic attacks to reduce.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively from the above analysis and interpretations done and the information from related literature, it implies that:

1. Experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State
2. Experienced and less experienced counsellors' perceive systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
4. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of experienced and less experienced counsellors perception on systematic desensitization as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Recommendations

On the basis of the implication of the study, this recommendation was made;

1. Government parietals should encourage all institutions through training on how to assist students to be confidence through techniques that will help students to defeat irrationality.
2. Through Seminars policy makers can teach students how not to be afraid by being affirmative through systematic dispelling of odd situations that discourages learning in schools

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