Efficacy of Systematic Desensitisation and Client Centred Therapies in Reducing Test Anxiety Among Secondary School Students in Ekiti State, Nigeria

ALADEGBOLA Adebusayo Gabriel

Lecturer, Educational Psychology, Ekiti State University, P.M.B.5363, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria

Corresponding author: aladegbola adebusayo Gabriel

ABSTRACT: The study investigated the efficacy of Systematic Desensitisation (SD) and Client Centred Therapy (CCT) in reducing test anxiety among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It further examined the possible influence that class level might have on the effectiveness of the therapies. The study is a Quasi Experimental research using 3x2x2 factorial design of two experimental groups and one control group. The two experimental groups are the behaviour therapy groups of SD and CC. The third group is the Control Group (CTR). Students that manifest symptoms of test anxiety in the 183 public secondary schools in Ekiti State constituted the population of the study. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select 400 students from each of three schools randomly selected from the grade A schools in one senatorial zone of the State. 316 over-anxious students were screened from the pool of 1,200 students using Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS). The final sample consisted of 90 learners selected from the 316 over anxious students using proportional random sampling. The research instruments were Sanje’s (2007) Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) and Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ). The 90 respondents were assigned into two experimental groups and one control group. Students from two schools were assigned, one to each of the experimental groups of SDBT and CCT while subjects from the third school were assigned to the control group (CTR). The three groups were pre tested using Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ). The two experimental groups (SDBT & CCT) were exposed to treatment while the control group (CTR) did not undergo any treatment but continued in the normal classroom activities. At the end of the treatment, the three groups were given a post test using Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ). Analysis of data using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance revealed that the learners’ class level did not cause any significant difference in the efficacy of the therapies in the two experimental groups. The finding also revealed that there was no significant difference between the efficacy capacities of CCT and SD. Based on the above findings, appropriate recommendation was made.

Keywords: Anxiety; Client; Centred; Desensitisation; Systematic

INTRODUCTION

Learners within the school setting, like any other individual, react differently to various activities around them, particularly test and examination situations. (Arowosegbe, 1997) observed that some of the learners in Nigerian schools confront test situations with boldness and optimism while some that are faced with the same tasks appear very jittery and always not composed. These reactions seem to be rooted in the level of anxiety in individual learner. (Owuamanam & Owuamanam, 2003) described anxiety as an arousal of physical and physiological states of an individual as well as a situation whereby dispositions seem to be accompanied by muscle flex due to agitations from within. They further described anxiety as a state of apprehension, worry and tension in response to imminent danger which seems to be associated with the painful unrest of mind.

As it was reported by (Tinuola, 2006), an individual’s behaviour seems to be a reflection of how he or she feels about himself or herself and in fact the mirror of the ‘self’ in such individual. The manner at which a man perceives himself therefore seems to determine the extent at which such a man copes with activities, situations and the events around him. The extent of anxiety that is displayed by an individual at every point in time may be sourced in the way a man conceives himself particularly socially and intellectually. It may therefore not be an
exaggeration if it is assumed that any reaction to a specific situation like a learner’s reaction to test situation might be rooted in the individual’s self concept. Individuals may be different from one another, particularly in their physiological and psychological dispositions. The individual difference syndrome, combined with some environmental factors may influence the opinion formed about oneself towards an important school activities like tests and examinations.

From our daily interactions with various people from different works of life, it could be observed that while some people consistently approach situations with confidence with the hope that they could succeed virtually in all tasks, some are perpetually despotic and coward. Some become extra anxious and submit quickly to failure. Nigerian secondary school learners seem not to be exempted from this catalogue of biological and environmental differences in their approaches to some school activities. School activities among the learners in the secondary schools seem to be a point of focus of researchers across culture. Activity in this context could either be curricular or extra curricular which implies that activities could either be within or outside the classroom settings. Most Nigerian writers seem to be more concerned with curricular activities in their researches. Researchers appear to be much more interested in the cognitive ability of the young learners whom are frequently referred to as ‘leaders of tomorrow’. This could be the reason why African researchers, like their counterparts in the first world countries, attached an importance to some school activities like intra and interclass quiz competition, class tests, inter school quiz competitions, terminal examinations and related others as these activities appear to be very important to African researchers.

Several publications and research findings had been reported about Nigerian learners in test and examination situation. Konde (1994) reported that only few Nigerian students conveniently sit down with both the physiological and physical components in order while facing tests and examination situation. It was stressed that a huge number of them get chattered within and without at the hear of test. This assertion is just one of the several other reports that more than 75% of Nigerian secondary school learners wallow in excess anxiety so much so that they appear to have been completely taken over by frustrations in test and examination situations (Sawoe, 1991).

To experience anxiety in test situation seems not to be the problem, rather, being overtly and perpetually taken over by it is the problem (Olofintoye, 2005). It therefore seems not to be abnormal experiencing some levels of difficulties as individuals strive to succeed in any learning environment rather, allowing oneself to be overtly confronted by such difficulties regularly could be frustrating. It is always helpful to stay within the normal anxiety level called state anxiety, a situation whereby an ambition is not perpetually over celebrated than the aptitude, if otherwise, trait anxiety is said to be in place and this appears to be the habit of some Nigerian secondary school adolescents (Johnson, 2004).

Relevant dose of anxiety is what (Efuru, 2003) called ‘State or Normal Anxiety’. This type of anxiety is described as the level of tension that is proportional to the issue at hand and mainly temporarily directed towards achieving the goal in target. It is whenever anxiety becomes perpetual and uncontrollable in any situation that it becomes a pathology or what could be termed ‘trait anxiety’. (Bonarparte, 2002) called it a ‘disruptive anxiety’ and Johnson (1999) referred to it as an ‘anxiety disorder’. According to (Richard, 2004), it is an anxiety disorder or excess anxiety that is a focus whenever a mention is made of anxiety in learning situation. It is when an overwhelming anxiety is displayed by any learner in a test situation that such learner is described as having been taken over by test anxiety (Belgore, 1999).

Nigerian learners seem to be very popular in their poor conducts in tests and examination situations. (Folademi, 2001) observed that most of the misconducts in test and examination situations are the manifestations of excess anxiety. From personal observations, some secondary school students in Ekiti State frequently complain of restlessness and lack of concentrations at the approach of test. Some of the learners consistently lament that they do not always remember what they have read for the purpose of tests and examinations. This causes some of the learners to envisage failure before the test is written. Some of the learners in Ekiti State secondary schools that manifest these symptoms of unhelpful anxiety in test situations may not be different from their counterparts across Nigeria in their seeing test as a fearful activity that is purposely meant to punish learners.

The above scenario could be why some students consistently cause chaos and pandemonium in test situations so that the school authority may either cancel or reschedule tests. (Thomas, 2003) opined that students that suffer prolonged test anxiety may not remember what they even knew before the test. Anxiety invested students seem to give in to unnecessary agitation that they easily lose a focus of what they have read before the test. No sooner than when they might have left the test venue, Thomas observed that most of the test anxious students later remember what they forgot during test.

It was observed by (Wallace and Haru, 1992) that test anxious students unnecessarily take upon themselves worries and bother more about events that are in no way helpful in test situation. This may lead to their feeling dizzy and unworthy during tests. Such learners may see test as means of punishing them and such feelings tense them up in writing tests. (Grant, 2004) observed that all these are symptoms of extra ordinary anxiety which may in no way help in school achievement. As long as such behaviour persists among Ekiti State secondary school
learners, the standard of education as proposed by the Ekiti State stakeholders may never become a thing of reality.

**Theoretical Framework.**

The theoretical framework for this study would be based on two behavioural therapies; Carl Roger's Client Centred Counselling Theory and Joseph Wolpe's Systematic Desensitisation Therapy.

**The Problem.**

(Temilade, 2009) described tests and examinations as the cogent factors to promotions in every setting that allows competition. Test could therefore be described as an important issue particularly among the learners all over the world. Unfortunately, some Nigerian learners in Ekiti State secondary schools seem not to see test situations as an avenue for assessment and promotion as described above. They rather see it as an opportunity for the examiners to punish learners. (Samson, 1999) claimed that more than 87% Nigerian secondary school students as a whole suffer acute test anxiety. (John, 1999) opined that excess test anxiety is based in Nigeria and rules Nigerian learners with no exception to geographical zones, tribal differences, religion differences and socio economic status. Researches about the efficacy of the therapeutic means of reducing anxiety among the Nigerian Secondary school students had been highly inconsistent.

It was based on this that the researcher deemed it fit to investigate the efficacy of the two therapies (SDBT & CCT) in reducing test anxiety among the secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

**Research Hypotheses.**

The following hypotheses were generated for the purpose of the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the test anxiety of students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy and those exposed to client centred therapy.
2. There is no significant difference between the test anxiety of JSS and SSS students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy.

**Research Method**

The study was a quasi experimental type using 3X2X2 factorial design of two experimental groups of systematic desensitisation behaviour therapy (SDBT), client centred therapy and one control group (CTG). The factors considered by the design comprised of the age of the learners in Ekiti state secondary schools (early and late adolescent learners), the gender of the learners (Male and Female), the students' family type (Monogamy and Polygamy) and the learner's class (SSS and JSS). The design shows the effect of the dependent variables on each of the treatment groups. The research design is as shown below:

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Sample and Sampling Techniques.**

The sample for this study consisted of 90 secondary school students drawn by multi stage sampling technique from the population of 91,417 students in 183 secondary schools in Ekiti State that are too test anxious.

In the first stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select one out of the three senatorial zones in Ekiti State. In the second stage, purposive random sampling technique was adopted in selecting grade A schools in the senatorial zone for the study. In the third stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select three schools from the list of grade A schools. In the fourth stage, the researcher used stratified random sampling technique based on gender, age, class level and family type to select 400 students from each school.

giving a total of 1,200 learners. These subjects were exposed to a test anxiety screening instrument called Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS).

In the fifth stage, proportional random sampling technique was adopted to select 90 over anxious respondents as the sample for the study and these were assigned into two experimental groups and one control group. Students from two schools were assigned one to each of the experimental groups while subjects from the third school were assigned to the control group. The three groups were pre tested with Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ). The two experimental groups, SDBT & CCT were exposed to treatment while the control group did not undergo any treatment. At the end of the treatment, the three groups were given a post test using Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ).

Results

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference between the test anxiety of students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy and those exposed to client centred therapy.

To test the hypothesis, test anxiety mean scores of students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy and those exposed to client centred therapy were compared for statistical significance using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>Fcal</th>
<th>Ftable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected model</td>
<td>56.040</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.020</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariance (pretest)</td>
<td>22.90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.290</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>38.992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.992</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>22385.610</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>392.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected total</td>
<td>22441.650</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>214995.000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P>0.05

Table 1 shows that F-cal (0.099) is less than F-table (4.00) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the test anxiety of students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy and those exposed to client centred therapy.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference between the test anxiety of JSS and SSS students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy.

In testing the hypothesis, test anxiety mean scores of JSS and SSS students who were exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy were subjected to statistical analysis of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The result is shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Ms</th>
<th>Fcal</th>
<th>Ftable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected model</td>
<td>1826.328</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>913.164</td>
<td>1.467</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariance (pretest)</td>
<td>335.858</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>335.858</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>1761.310</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1761.310</td>
<td>2.830</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>16804.373</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>622.384</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected total</td>
<td>18630.700</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>112375.000</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P>0.05

The null hypothesis is accepted (F=2.830, p>0.05). It implies that there is no significant difference between the test anxiety of JSS and SSS students that were exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the hypothesis that states there is no significant difference between the test anxiety of students exposed to systematic desensitisation behaviour modification therapy and those exposed to client centred therapy is accepted. This implies that the difference between the respondents in the two experimental groups after the treatment was not significant. The above finding disagrees with (Sanni and Sanni, 2007) in the claim that SDBT is far more effective than CCT in treating mild anxiety.

The null hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between the test anxiety of JSS and SSS students exposed to SDBT is accepted. This implies that class level has no significant influence on the effectiveness of SDBT. This finding disagrees with (Bowman, 2001) in the submission that learners in higher class levels would respond less to therapies than learners in the lower classes. It also disagrees with (Victor
,1999), (Temilade, 2009) in the observations that anxiety must have stayed longer in the senior secondary school students and hence may not enable them submit to therapy unlike the Junior Secondary School students.

Summary
This study was designed to examine the efficacy of systematic desensitisation therapy (SDBT) and client centred therapy (CCT) in reducing test anxiety among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study investigated the influence of class level on the effectiveness of the two therapies in reducing test anxiety among the learners in Ekiti State Secondary Schools. The study was Quasi Experimental using 3x2x2 factorial design of two experimental and one control groups. One of the two experimental groups is systematic desensitisation behaviour therapy (SDBT) while the other stands for client centred therapy (CCT). The control group (CTR) constituted the third group. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. Two instruments were used for the study, the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) and Learners’ Anxiety Questionnaire (LAQ) and both instruments were validated and the reliability was ascertained appropriately.

CONCLUSION
It was revealed in the findings that the two therapies, SD and CCT were effective in reducing test anxiety among the secondary school students in Ekiti State. There was no significant difference in the effectiveness of the two therapies. It was also revealed that the effectiveness of the two therapies did not vary with the respondents’ class levels.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, CCT and SD are effective in reducing test anxiety among the secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This implies that the social workers, psychologists, councillors and other behaviour therapists could see the two therapies as viable tools in combating anxiety related problems among their clients.

REFERENCES