

RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY AND TRUANCY AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The main objective of this research paper is to demonstrate to the students with truancy that their self-verbalizations have been and are currently the source of their emotional disturbances. Truancy is an action of staying away from school without good reason, absenteeism. It is a major problem that cuts across all levels of education, among secondary school students' in the North Western Nigeria. The root causes of truancy include drug use, membership in a peer group of truants or gangs, lack of direction in education, Teachers attitude and violence at or near school. The researchers carried out a theoretical work by using counselling techniques in tackling the problem of truancy in the North Western States of Nigerian schools, Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) of Albert Ellis and Behavioural Modification were used in resolving the problem of truancy in schools. Various counselling implications were discussed such as the need to form an attendance review team to deal with the problem of truancy as early as possible, provision of individualize support for the student in school, building a positive school culture to guide the student in school and focusing on the most essential behaviours which were noticeable in schools. Problem of truancy would definitely be solved if suggested techniques and skills are appropriately used by a trained professional counsellor. The paper therefore suggested that Counsellors are to create a positive classroom environment with hands on activities, group discussions and active participation.

Keywords: Counselling, Techniques, Truancy, Students

Introduction

Education is the process of gaining knowledge. It the training and developing knowledge, skill, mind and character especially by formal schooling, teaching and training. It is also considered as the process which a society consciously transmit its knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. The school as one of the agents of socialization was established to mould, build and shape the youth to become useful to themselves and the society. Such conscious and intentional efforts usually focus in part on character development, behaviour modification and values orientation, especially among youths of the nation. School is a building where young people receive education. Innocent and Uche, (2020) view the school as centre of knowledge and it possess the power to mould and shape the character of individuals in the society. However, distortion and aberrations in the character of students are being reflected in the pattern of student's behaviour. If not checked such behaviour constitute impediment to meaningful classroom learning, school growth and development. Counselling as a process which clients learn how to make decisions and formulate new ways of behaving, feeling and thinking (Syed, 2017). Counselling is said to be a helping profession which deals with the process of helping individuals to discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological

potentialities and thereby achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness (Ipaye, 1995). Techniques are the major instruments used by counsellor during counselling session either in an individual or group which makes counselling differed from advice giving. Truancy is the act of shirking from responsibility and duty especially from attending school.

Behaviour modification is the systematic application of antecedent and consequences to change behaviour. It refers mainly to techniques for increasing adaptive behaviour through reinforcement and decreasing maladaptive behaviour through punishment but with emphasis on reinforcement. Interventions based on behaviour principles to change the behaviour and careful measurement of the changes. Method of behaviour modification refers to the planned ways of studying and altering behaviour. Modeling techniques are said to have been used with the impressive success in the treatment of phobias.

Concept of Truancy

Truancy is one of the antisocial discipline problems among secondary school students in Nigeria. The concept and acts of indiscipline have received a lot of attention by researchers. Peck in Oluremi, (2013) opined that the various behaviour disorders like stealing, violence, drug abuse, examination malpractice, sexual abuse and truancy have so undermined effective teaching learning processes, that some teachers have become helpless and disorganized in their lack of imparting knowledge to learners. Truancy is any intentional unauthorized or illegal absence from compulsory schoolings. It may also refer to students who attend school but do not go to classes. Truancy is non-school attendance behaviour. It is an irregular attendance of school. Truancy is the action of staying from school without good reason or without permission (Attwood and Croll 2006) and when a student intentionally misses more than the allowed number of days of school (Kristi, 2016) other names for truancy are school refusals or school phobia (Sigmon, 2001 in Innocent & Uche, 2020).

Truancy is international, unadjusted, unsatisfied, unauthorized or illegal absence from compulsory education. It is deliberate absence by a student's own free will (thought sometimes adults/parents will allow and or ignore it) and usually explicitly defined in the school's handbook of policies and procedures (Iliya, 2010). Some student whose parents are facing a lot of challenges in Kano State because Truancy, attending school but not going to class. The prevalence and correlates of truancy among school-going adolescents in three West African countries between 2012 and 2017 have shown that 8912 school going adolescent's age 11-18 years who participated in the Global School- based Student Health Survey between 2012 and 2017. The overall prevalence of past 30-day truancy in the countries were 22.9 %, 36.5 % and 45.9 % for Benin, Ghana and Liberia respectively. The findings show that boys generally reported higher prevalence of truancy than girls in the three countries. Tata, Shehu, and Aliyu, (2015) worked on Investigation into the Causes of Truancy among Public senior Secondary School Students in Azare, Metropolis of Bauchi State, Nigeria. 357 students were used and the findings showed that 232 students 65% rate of truancy were higher while 125 (35%) were low but the causes of truancy which emanate from student include low intelligence, weak physical health, social and emotional, maladjustment. It was also found out that some causes of truancy emanating from the school include fear of teachers, fear of school activities and difficulties of school subjects.

Types of Truancy

There are three types of truancy which are as follows:

- i. **Habitual truancy:** This type of truancy that occurs when a truant student constantly and continually absents and the school authorities. It is mainly miss numerous full days of school days. The level has become a regular behaviour or habit.
- ii. **Occasional truancy:** This type of truancy occurs when a student does not constantly and continually absent himself from school. The student's level of absenteeism from school without the permission of the parents or school authority is not regular.
- iii. **Casual truancy:** this is the type of truancy that occurs when the student absents himself from school by chance. This type of truancy is not regular and constant, but happens by chance.

Causes of Truancy

Mark, (2016) describes truancy as joy us rebellion against authority and responsibility and various factors were identified according to him which includes:

Family Factor

Mark opined that inadequate supervision on the part of student's parent, too much house chores, non-intact homes such as divorce; broken, separated, living apart can cause truancy. He further expatiated that illiteracy on the part of student's parent as a result of ignorance is another cause. Mark, (2016) also pointed out that poor social economic factor on the part of the student's parent, truancy and also accepted that parenting styles can also responsible for student's truancy in school. Parenting styles include authoritarian and lazier-faire or when a student is endowed with too much freedom may also contribute.

School Influence

School as one of the agencies of socialization can also responsible for truancy on the following ways; negative peer influence, un conducive school enrolment, bullying by the student's colleagues, boredom as a result failure, overpopulation of members, poor location of school, community influences and when teachers' method of teaching is not enjoyable.

Student Factor

The students themselves are influenced and several factors are caused for their truancy include when a student is a slow learner he or she sees nothing attractive in school, emotional problem as a result of inferiority complex, lack of ambition as popularly called "No Future Ambition" (NFA), getting poor grades will discourage him or her from school and learning disabilities and difficulties would scare him or her away from school. Such a student may decide to taking of substances abuse.

Health Factor

This is another factor that responsible for truancy among students in secondary schools include illness, mental illness, mental retardation, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Effects of Truancy

Several effects of truancy on the students include:

- i. Low or poor academic performance in school.
- ii. Cheating and involving in examination malpractices
- iii. Joining of gangs
- iv. Involvement in substance abuse
- v. Involvement in crime such as stealing
- vi. Juvenile delinquency
- vii. Isolation, he or she may prefer to be alone always
- viii. Involvement in sexual misconduct.
- ix. It may cause unwanted pregnancy
- x. It may result to school drop out
- xi. It may result to mental illness if persisted

Handling a Student with School Truancy

- i. Counselling is a voluntary self-help profession and the student who needs help should contact the trained counsellor for rehabilitation.
- ii. It may be a referral from the parents or teachers of the client to see a counsellor if the parent discovers that he or she needs help.
- iii. The client may submit him or herself when he or she realizes his/her challenge and might decide to seek counsellor's help.
- iv. The counsellor can notice or discover the student with the problem of truancy and decides to invite him other for counselling.

Counselling Clinic

The venue where the client and the counsellor are meeting during counselling session is called counseling clinic. The setting is attractive, containing comfortable furniture, tape recorder, files and jotters, various psychological tests or inventories for collecting data of the client during counselling session.

Pre Counselling

Before moving to counselling proper, there would be pre counselling on the part of the counsellor where he or she is expected to create a rapport establishment, asking questions concerning the bio-data of the client, guaranteeing of the client's confidentiality which involves keeping secret-secret. Seeking indulgence of the client, to jot down notes if needed to record the counseling session, especially for academic purpose and finally agreement on time and venue of meeting.

Ways of Tackling Truancy

- i. Truancy may be handled at the initial stage in the following ways if the client problem's is discovered at early stage before it becomes a perpetual truant.
- ii. They may form an attendance team (monitoring attendance daily)
- iii. Be friendly with the truant student
- iv. Celebrating the successes of the truant
- v. Joining clubs and parties participating in sports: A truant would definitely come on the day of sport if loved sports.
- vi. Instructing parents and guardians to engage in proper monitoring their wards.

Counselling Process

The task of counsellor is to work with individual who are unhappy and troubled (truancy) and show them that their difficulties are largely the result of their own distorted perception. He makes them accept that there are relatively simple, though work-requiring method of re-ordering their perceptions and re-organizing their thinking so as to remove the basic causes of their difficulties. Ellis contends that counsellors should teach their counselees to re-think life events so as to remove the basic causes of their difficulties of truancy. Counsellors should modify their illogical thoughts, motives and behaviour. Counsellors should follow the following process:

- i. Create a positive classroom environment with hands on activities, group discussions and active participation.
- ii. Build positive relationships with student and parents.
- iii. Discuss truancy with the parents
- iv. Implement inceptives for attendance.
- v. Implement options for recovery

Implications for Counselling

Family background factor, poor academic performance, extra ordinary involvement in curricular activities, poor self-concept, poor preparation for daily or weekly tests and assignments, incomplete homework, low self-esteem and inferiority complex are the major contributory factors to truancy.

The study identified the effects of truancy as poor academic performance for the truants, their class and school, wastage of learning time, dropping out of school, poverty to the individual and family in future, involvement in delinquent behaviour, family instability Social maladjustment and in security in the family.

Conclusion

Truancy is one of the behaviour that causes examination failure in our schools. This behaviour is very perpetual in our schools and there would be need to cur bit. Many of the students that are physically and mentally sound cannot attain or achieve academic success due to truancy. If truancy is dealt with at early stage it would not harm the future of the student. Various skills and techniques can be employed in tackling the problem of truancy among students in Nigerian schools if well handled by a professional trained counsellor. The counsellor can use more than one technique to achieve the desired goal which is

behaviour modification. However, this goal cannot be achieved in a session, it might take some weeks or months depending on the gravity of the maladaptive behaviour (in this case truancy needs to be dealt with since it can ruin the career of a students in the future).

Recommendations

- i. Parents should put more effort to ensure that their student are adequately provided for and give them moral character guidance.
- ii. Peer group factor, that is bad company, classmates joke, friendship with trouble making students and invitation from outsider friends are the major factors that causes a student to exhibit truancy.
- iii. There is need for proper enlightenments and orientation by the school counsellors to the students on the dangers inherent in truancy.
- iv. There is needed to form an attendance review team by the school management in collaboration with the school counsellor to tackle problem of truancy as early as possible.
- v. There is need for the school counsellors to provide individualize counselling support by using REBT and other techniques that will help student with behaviour disorder in the school.
- vi. There is need for the counsellors to build a positive school culture that will guide students in their school life.
- vii. There is also need for the counsellor to focus on the most essential behaviours that are noticeable and used techniques like REBT in tackling truants in the schools.
- viii. School administrators and Counsellors should organize and invite parents of truants for conference with a view to reducing the menaces of truancy in the schools.

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