

EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING INTERVENTION PROGRAMME ON SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENT WITH SOCIAL ISOLATION

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Abstract:

The study investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention programme on social competence of in-school adolescent with social isolation. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The design of the study was a quasi-experimental non-equivalent pretest-posttest research design involving one experimental and one control group. The sample consists of twelve (12) socially isolated senior secondary school class five students from two schools in Igbo-Etiti L.G.A in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Two instruments used for the study were Social Isolation Identification Scale (SIIS) and Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRS). These were validated by experts and used for data collection. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while analysis of covariance was used to test the null hypotheses. Major findings of the study reveal that gender did not have any significant influence on the mean social competence scores of in-school adolescent exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme and those that were not. The interaction effect of gender and treatment on social competence of in-school adolescent with Social Isolation was not significant. Based on these findings, conclusions were drawn and educational implications discussed. Major recommendations made were: to educate and expose both the pre-service and in-service teachers to the skills of cognitive restructuring intervention programme that can enable them train in-school adolescents especially the socially isolated individuals for effective social interactions in the classroom.

Introduction

Adolescence is referred to as a stage of maturation between childhood and adulthood which denotes the period beginning from puberty to maturity (Castro, 2008). According to Castro, it usually starts at about age 14 in males and age 12 in females. Within these perspectives, in-school adolescent is viewed as relating to school activities and that of the adolescent on the course of development, through a transitional period of cognitive development between childhood and adulthood, whose cultural purpose is the preparation of children for adult roles while in school (Mayers, 2004). This preparation is so because, it is in the school that adolescents acquire basic tenets of social, cognitive and/or intellectual development. Cognitive advances encompass both increases in knowledge and the ability to think abstractly and to reason more effectively. According to Piaget, (1986) the ability of the

adolescent to solve complex problems is a function of accumulated learning and education. Hence, an in-school adolescent refers to a typical adolescent who is in school; be it college or high school, poised to acquire learning experiences necessary to transit into adulthood (Schneider, 1999). For the purpose of this study, in-school adolescents could be referred to as students in secondary school. It is often a period characterized by physical, psychological and socio-cultural expressions of these teenagers and their emotions (Bryan, 2006). Bryan further maintained that their emotions at this stage are high and may lead to so many changes in their social, psychological and physical development. These changes are critical to understanding their social relationships and/or interactions.

Some individuals appear content to spend most of their hours and days removed from others due to lack of social interaction. Conversely, there are those individuals who, while in social company, avoid their confreres, or who actively choose lives of solitude to escape the initiation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. It is not the display of solitude per se that may pose a problem; rather the central issue is that social isolation may reflect underlying difficulties of a social, academic or emotional nature (Kenneth, 2009). Social isolation is defined as an internal state in which the individual lacks a sense of belonging in social relationships leading to exclusion and inability to meet one's social goals in the company of their peers (Chen 2006). According to Chen, this is more likely to have direct experience of peer neglect and rejection than their more sociable age-mates. These problem behaviours seem to be exhibited by the socially isolated individuals and it is believed to affect ones' social relationship.

Man as a social being interacts with others. The ability to interact with others and to be competent in doing so has been ranked as one of the most important skills one can have (Rubin and Asendorpf 1993). It is through one's interactions with others that one's experiences become richer, more significant, and through it one learns, engages, reflects and becomes socially competent. Social competence refers to the ability to manage and contribute to one's social interactions. According to Rubin and Rose-krasnor (2001), Social competence is the ability to achieve personal goals in social interactions while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others over time and across situation. This social competence is believed to be necessary for optimal performance not only in social setting but could also enhance academic performance of in-school adolescent.

Evidently, following the West African senior secondary school certificate examination results in the past four years (2009-2012) show clearly the declining state of secondary school students' achievement in external examinations in the state. In 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, only 25.99%, 24.94%, 30.99% and 25.76% of candidates respectively obtained credits in five subjects including English language and Mathematics (Kurumeh & Imoko, 2009; Moseai, Onwuka & Iweka 2010; Iyi 2011 and Iyi 2012); which are the minimum entry requirements for admission into Nigerian Universities. This poor achievement could be attributed to so many factors. These factors may include isolation, school type and emotional dispositions of the students. And as such, may have had link to the cognitive structures or schema

developed early in childhood. Thus, the cognitive structures or schema developed in early relationship in the family according to Ngwoke (2005), serve as the prototype for the child's later relationship in school, marriage, family life, government, religion and other institutions in the society.

Cognitive restructuring intervention programme is a learning skill designed to refute negative interpretations, or fundamental "faulty thinking" with the goal of replacing one's irrational, counter-factual beliefs with more accurate and beneficial ones (Ellis, 1998). The cognitive restructuring theory holds that one's own unrealistic beliefs are directly responsible for generating dysfunctional emotions and their resultant behaviour, like stress, depression, anxiety and social withdrawal, and that one can get rid of such emotions and their effects by dismantling the beliefs that give them life (Ellis, 1967). The indication is that when this therapeutic technique is well applied, these socially isolated in-school adolescents will realize the negative values, beliefs, attitude and practices or knowledge they have about socialization and work hard towards eliminating and replacing them with positive ones.

Maduwesi (2005) opined that the growing problem in school performance and engagement that many children face seem to be defined by issues of historical privilege. The pattern of child-rearing and socialization practice obtainable in Nigeria seems to allow young boys more privileges than girls. They may both have to work, but for boys it is outside the home, expanding their horizons, for girls, it is inside the home, restricting their interactions and experience. This gender imbalance seems to hinder one's achievement.

Gender refers to socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with males and females (Nwagbara 1998; & Okeke, 2000). Gender as a social construct has to do with behaving according to type- male or female; boy or girl. When one aspires to a height and is discouraged on gender basis, one's aspiration is dwarfed. To that extent, gender role destroys confidence one has in one's ability to socialize so as to achieve a greater height socially, academically and otherwise.

Several efforts were made to curb the problem of social isolation which emanates from inadequate social relationship. This is believed, results to active withdrawal, bullying, and other forms of anti-social behaviours exhibited by in-school adolescents. This may linger even as students move higher in education. A number of studies document decline in students' social competence as they move from secondary schools to tertiary institutions. This is the stage when children decline in socialization and gender stereotype becomes more pronounced. Erikson (1963) refers to this stage as "*ego identity versus role diffusion*" when puberty sets in and a reversal in social attitude takes shape- an apparent decline in group activities with tendency to prefer to be alone occurs. According to Erickson, the curve of social learning or the socialization process shows a downward trend, indicating a negative phase of social development.

In-school adolescents, therefore, requires a minimum level of social and emotional competence to function in a group and benefit from the learning environment of the school setting. This social and emotional readiness is critical to

successful transition and success in the early grades (Peth-Pierce, 2001). Hence, assisting the male and female socially isolated in-school adolescents may require such a help which according to Ekenta (2009) could be in the form of providing them with information about appropriate social skills and helping them stay away from self-preoccupied worries and negative self-talks. This may be particularly helpful to the socially isolated male and female students' cognitive functioning. Improving the cognitive functioning of socially isolated in-school adolescents involves modification of their distorted thoughts concerning social relationships. This modification of distorted thoughts concerning social relationships could be achieved through cognitive restructuring intervention programme. This is what this study is set out to investigate.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a period of stress and storm accompanied with decline in social interactions. Social interaction has been effective not only in improving one's relationship with others but also in enhancing academic achievement of an individual. It is worthy to note that in some schools today, there have been cases of active isolation, bullying, and other forms of anti-social behaviours. This is believed to be exhibited by socially isolated in-school adolescent.

Regrettably, despite efforts by schools, parents and guardians to address these anti-social behavioural problems emanating from socially isolated in-school adolescents the menace still persists. This problem is a worry to major stakeholders in the education sector. It is also not quite clear whether this behaviour is more exhibited by males or females. However, early intervention and preventive measures seems to be efficacious in cases of in-school adolescents with social isolation as it might enhance their social competence. Not much research has gone into the field in Nigeria. Perhaps, most intervention strategies have been on Social Skills Training (SST), which includes modeling, behaviour rehearsal, feed-back and reinforcement frequently used in association with interpersonal problem solving and social perception skills training.

Effective change in social behaviour also requires interventions that reduce inhibiting and competing behaviours across gender such as cognitive restructuring intervention programme. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine how effective cognitive restructuring intervention programme would be on social competence of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the:

1. Effect of cognitive restructuring intervention programme on social competence of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation.
2. Interaction effect of treatment and gender on the social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Scope of the Study

The study investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention programme on social competence of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation in Nsukka Education Zone, Enugu State. The study was restricted to all senior secondary five in-school adolescents with social isolation in Nsukka Education Zone.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention programme on social competence of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation?
2. What is the interaction effect of gender and treatment on social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

H0₁. Cognitive restructuring intervention programme has no significant effect on the mean social competence scores of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation.

H0₂. The interaction effect of treatment and gender on social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation is not significant.

Method

The study adopted a quasi-experimental non-equivalent pretest posttest control group design. The justification for adopting it is in line with Nworgu, (2006), who described quasi-experimental design as the type in which random assignment of subjects to experimental and control group is not possible. In this case, *intact or pre-existing* groups are used. Here, the researcher uses two groups/streams of a class as experimental and control groups respectively.

Diagrammatic representation of Quasi-Experimental Design:

Experimental groups	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Treatment	O_1	X_1	O_1
Control	O_1	X_2	O_2

The symbols are explained as follows:

X_1 = Treatment (Cognitive restructuring package).

O_1 = Pre-test administered to both treatment and control groups.

O_2 = Post-test administered to both treatment and control groups.

X_2 = Control (Conventional counseling on social skills).

Area of the Study

This study will be conducted in Nsukka Education Zone, which is located in Enugu North senatorial zone of Enugu state. The education zone comprises three Local Government Areas of Igbo-Etiti, Nsukka and Uzo-Uwani. The researcher is interested in carrying out the study in the zone because of some observed social isolation among in-school adolescents which border on inadequate social relationship. The in-school adolescents in the area were previously known for their high level of discipline, obedience, and commitment to educational activities. But in recent time poor academic performance and high level of indiscipline exist in the schools. This is a clear indication of inadequate social interaction among in-school adolescents hence need for the study.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised 68 identified secondary school five in-school adolescents with social isolation in Nsukka Education Zone, 2015/2016 session. The sample for the study comprised twelve (12) identified in-school adolescents with social isolation, drawn from two intact classes in Igbo-Etiti local government area of Nsukka Education Zone. The researcher purposively sampled Igbo-Etiti local government area from the three local government areas in Nsukka Education Zone namely, Nsukka L. G.A, Igbo-Etiti LGA, and Uzo-Uwani L.G.A. Using purposive sampling technique, the researcher drew two schools with the highest number of socially isolated ones. These two schools drawn were purposively assigned to experimental and control groups using simple balloting. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to draw two intact classes with the highest number of in-school adolescents with social isolation from each school drawn. This is because SI is not peculiar to every child. Each intact class comprised of 32 and 30 in-school adolescent respectively; 15 males and 17 females and the other 14 males and 16 females. The stratification was based on gender considering those with the highest number of pupils with social isolation.

Questionnaires were the instruments used for the study. It was developed by the researcher and used for data collection. Schutz (1967) social competence rating scale was adapted and used to measure the social competence level of the identified pupils with SI. Social isolation identification scale was developed with the help of experts in Educational Psychology Unit, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and was used to identify those with SI. The instruments were face and content validated by three experts who are University lecturers, two from Educational Psychology unit of Educational Foundations Department and Guidance/ Counseling Unit in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha method was used to measure the internal consistency co-efficient of (SIIS) and (SCRS). The Alpha coefficient value for Social Isolation Identification Scale (SIIS) is 0.88; Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRS) 0.81.

Development of the Training Programme for the Groups

- **Treatment Programme (Experimental Group): Cognitive Restructuring Intervention Programme**

The programme was developed by the researcher with the help of three experts. In developing this programme, the researcher identified and stated specific objectives to be achieved, activities of the trainer and the trainees, strategies to be adopted and the evaluation process. The training programme was designed to last for four weeks. The programme was divided into 4 sessions; with each session lasting for 40 minutes.

- **Control Group Programme: Conventional Counseling on Social Skills**

In this programme, the trainer will counsel students on social skills using conventional method. The initial draft of the training programme was face validated by three experts from Educational Psychology Unit in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Experimental Procedure

The researcher sought the co-operation of the Headmasters of the schools involved in this study before the commencement of the training. The teachers in the intact classes in the treatment school received training before the commencement of the programme. But that of the control group did not. The objective is to ensure that these regular teachers in the treatment school who served as research assistants acquire the necessary competencies for the implementation of the programmes.

Before the commencement of the actual treatments, subjects in both the experimental and control groups were pre-tested with social isolation and social competence questionnaires. The pre-test scores were used as covariates to the student's post-test scores at the end of the treatment. The classes for subjects in both the treatment and control groups were held during their normal time on the school time table (precisely, during free period). Each group met for 40 minutes a day, twice in a week for four (4) weeks.

The Social Isolation Identification and Social Competence Questionnaires were re-administered to the subjects in both treatment and control group a week after the treatment has stopped. Adequate precautions were taken in modifying the Social Isolation Identification Scale (SIIS) and Social Competence Rating Scale (SCRS) at the posttest stage. A number of steps were taken to control extraneous variables that will likely constitute threat to the validity of the study. These variables include: Hawthorn Effect, Experimental Bias and Time Factor.

The data generated from the instrument was analyzed in line with research questions and hypotheses. Mean and Standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. Univariate Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

What is the effect of cognitive restructuring intervention programme on the social competence of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation?

Table 1: The Mean and Standard Deviation of the in-school adolescents' pretest-posttest scores on social competence by Gender

Experimental groups	Gender	Mean gain	Pretest		Posttest		
			n	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
Cognitive restructuring scores	Males		28	2.19	0.84	3.34	0.61
	Females		39	2.11	0.81	3.45	0.53
	Total		67	2.09	0.79	3.37	0.52
Control scores	Males		24	2.21	0.90	2.39	0.82
	Females		29	2.22	0.88	2.07	0.84
	Total		53	2.18	0.77	2.17	0.79
Total scores	Males	42	2.23	0.81	2.88	0.89	6.32
	Females	64	2.14	0.83	3.03	0.86	9.23
	Total	106	2.16	0.88	3.11	0.87	7.99

Results in Table 1 above indicate that male in-school adolescents in the experimental group had a pretest mean social competence score of 2.19 with a standard deviation of 0.84 and posttest mean social competence score of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.61. The mean gain scores of male students in the experimental group was 1.31 while their counterparts in the control group had a pretest mean social competence score 2.21 with a standard deviation of 0.90 and posttest mean social competence score of 2.29 with a standard deviation of 0.82. The mean gain scores of male in-school adolescents in the control group is 0.29. The female students in the experimental group had a pretest mean social competence score of 2.11 with a standard deviation of 0.81 and posttest mean social competence score of 3.45 with a standard deviation of 0.53. The mean gain scores for the female in-school adolescents in the experimental group was 1.37. Their counterparts in the control group had a pretest mean social competence of 2.22 with a standard deviation of 0.88, and post test mean social competence score of 2.07 with a standard deviation of 0.84. The

mean gain scores for students in the control group was 0.17. However, the female in-school adolescent in the experimental group performed better than their male counterparts. Both the male and female in-school adolescent in the experimental group, however, performed better than the male and female students in the control group.

The difference between the mean social competence scores of socially isolated male and female in-school adolescents who were exposed to cognitive restructuring is further tested using the correspondence hypothesis.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean social competence scores of male and female in-school adolescents exposed to CRIP and those that were not.

Results presented in table 2 below reveal the f-value of .319 with respect to gender as main factor to be significant at .592 and thus not significant difference in the social competence scores of male and female in-school adolescents exposed to CRIP. The null hypothesis of no significant effect of CRIP on the mean social competence of socially isolated in-school adolescents, therefore, stands. This shows that the male and female socially isolated students benefited equally from the treatment given. Gender was not a significant factor on social competence of the socially isolated in-school adolescents and the null hypothesis is, therefore, not rejected.

Table 2: Summary of the Univariate Analysis of Variance on the Socially Isolated In-school adolescents' level of social competence.

Scores	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Corrected model	34.278 ^a	4	8.569	21.490	.000
Intercept	93.326	1	93.326	234.038	.000
Pretest	.199	1	.199	.498	.482
Experimental	31.454	1	31.454	78.879	.000
Gender	.124	1	.124	.319	.592
Experimental Gender	.637	1	.637	1.622	.301
Error	37.484	94	.399		
Total	910.356	99			
Corrected Total	71.761				

a. R Squared = 478 (Adjusted R Squared = 455).

Research Question Two

What is the interaction effect of gender and treatment on social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation?

Table 3: Post-test mean scores and standard deviation of male and female students in post test mean social competence scores of in-school adolescent with social isolation.

Experimental Groups	Gender	Mean	SD	n
Cognitive restructuring	Males	3.30	0.59	21
	Females	3.40	0.48	40
	Total	3.48	0.68	61
Control	Males	2.28	0.76	22
	Females	2.03	0.81	16
	Total	2.39	0.61	38
Total	Males	2.78	0.85	43
	Females	3.01	0.86	56
	Total	2.91	0.86	99

Results in table 3 show that female and male in-school adolescents exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme had a higher mean social competence score of 3.48 with a standard deviation of 0.68 than male and female in-school adolescent in the control group which had a lower mean social competence score of 2.39 with a standard deviation of 0.61. The interaction effect of gender and cognitive restructuring intervention programme on the social competence of students with social isolation was further tested using the corresponding hypothesis.

HO₂: There is no significant interaction effect of gender and cognitive restructuring intervention programme on the social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Data in table 2 indicate that the interaction effect of treatment and gender on the social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation is not significant. This is shown by the calculated F-value of 1.622 which is significant at .301 levels and therefore not significant at 0.05 probability levels. The hypothesis of no significant interaction effect of treatment and gender on social competence is, therefore, not rejected. The data, however, reveals that CRIP enhances the mean social competence scores of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Summary of the Major Findings of the Study.

There is no significant effect on the mean social competence scores of socially isolated in-school adolescents exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme and those that were not.

There is no significant interaction effect of gender and cognitive restructuring on the mean social competence scores of in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Discussion of Results

Results of this study reveal that there is no significant difference in the mean social competence scores of male and female in-school adolescents with social isolation exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme. The experimental group exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme has no significant gender influence on their social competence mean scores. This result is in line with Yale, (2011) which revealed that there is no significant gender difference in social competence level of high school college students. The study of Perry & Jones (2009) also showed that gender has no direct influence on social competence. The result of this study therefore, indicates that male and female socially isolated in-school adolescents benefited equally from the experiment as can be seen in table 1, it could be therefore, that the observed difference in the social competence of males and females was as a result of chance factors such as inconsistency in response of individuals or bias nature of students at that point in time. The fact that both male and female socially isolated in-school adolescent were exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme could have been the reason for the non-significant difference in their social competence. The findings of this study show that the socio-cultural factors which create gender differences in task accomplishment are removed when equal opportunities are created for both boys and girls. The equal involvements of boys and girls in the cognitive restructuring intervention programme could have resulted in the non-significance difference in the social competence of socially isolated in-school adolescents.

The findings of this study have also revealed that there is no significant interaction effect of gender and cognitive restructuring intervention programme on social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation. Hence, the hypotheses of no significant interaction effect of gender and treatment on social competence is, therefore not rejected. This is in line with the study of Edinburgh (2013) that shows no significant difference in the interaction effect of gender and treatment on social skills of socially isolated individuals.

Conclusion

There was no significant difference in the mean social competence scores male and female in-school adolescents exposed to cognitive restructuring intervention programme and those that were not. So, gender has no significant influence on socially isolated in-school adolescents' social competence.

There was no significant interaction effect between gender and cognitive restructuring intervention programme on the social competence of in-school adolescents with social isolation.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Writers of textbooks should be encouraged to include in their study guide the relevant social skills for effective social competence that both male and female in-school adolescents can utilize at any particular point. This will help

them understand the need for adequate social relationships with their peers in and outside the school environment through teachers' guidance.

- Male and female in-school adolescents should be exposed equally to training in cognitive restructuring intervention programme since this study has revealed that the training significantly improves their social competence. This will help eliminate gender imbalance in the classroom, because the objective of teaching is to make students' learn or acquire knowledge not in favour of male or female.

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