

Counselling Strategies for Improving Self-Esteem Among Secondary School Students in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated counsellors' perceptions of counselling strategies for improving self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State (SFISASSSIES). These students should be taught self-esteem, as it is a crucial quality for adolescents' academic and general success. Every child's academic performance is heavily influenced by their self-perception and mannerisms or SELF-ESTEEM. In my capacity as a counsellor, I have seen that these students' persistent academic deficiencies stem from a lack of self-worth, which in turn leads to a lack of confidence and ongoing academic failure. This research specifically sought to ascertain whether counsellors perceive Cognitive Restructuring (CR), Group Counselling (GC), and SQ3R Robinson Method (SRM), as strategies for enhancing self-esteem among sss in Enugu State. This was done with particular reference to the gender, counsellor's experience and location of the schools of the respondents. The population of the study is 105 counsellors currently serving in the 291 government-owned secondary schools(ss) in Enugu State. 96 copies were returned signifying 91.43% and used to collect the data for the study using a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researcher called Counselling Strategies for Enhancing Self-esteem Scale (CSESES). The instrument was face-validated by three experts: one in the Department of Education Faculty, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu. Cronbach Alpha Reliability estimate was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. A descriptive survey research design was used and data collected for this study were analyzed using mean, grand mean and standard deviation, to answer research questions. The result showed that counsellors perceive CR, GC&SRM as effective SFISASSSIES.

Keywords: Counselling Strategies, Self-Esteem, Schools

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Introduction

There is societal worry over young people especially those in secondary schools worldwide regarding social problems and their consequences. As in previous generations, the social issues facing today's youths can have significant effects on how these young people will eventually turn out as they reach adulthood (Royaweb, 2015). The social problems, according to Royaweb (2015), include drug abuse, alcohol abuse, smoking and new designer drugs which are being introduced in the black market daily. Similarly, sex and sexual issues are discussed and practised openly against acceptable norms of society.

These self-destructive activities have affected the thought lines of secondary school students, caused distractions and removed their focus from serious academic activities. The behaviours listed above are social problems which include drug abuse and the like and these are found manifesting in young people who have no confidence in themselves as to look beyond their predicaments for solutions. Research by Branden (2013), showed that lack of faith in students results in a complete loss of acceptance of self, leading to destructive behaviours that affect mental health. They verbalize negative things to themselves and hold onto those negative things. Branden (2013) asserted that self-esteem deficit contributes to mental health problems, making one think that he or she is undeserving, inappropriate, lacks confidence, makes negative choices and sets wrong goals. Branden went further to observe that all these lead to destructive behaviours and a complete loss of faith in one's self and life.

Again, a study by Mohaned (2014), referred to self-esteem as an overreacting view of the self. Mohaned added that the development of healthy self-esteem is significant for young people to be happy and successful. According to Mohaned, the term, 'self-esteem' has received a significant portion of attention in both educational and social fields. In a similar vein, research carried out by Rodewalk and Tragakis (2003), looked at self-esteem as an ongoing phenomenon that withstands criticism and endures controversies. Rodewalk et al asserted that the ability of self-esteem to endure controversy is an indicator of importance.

The researcher perceives self-esteem as the way one feels and thinks about oneself translates into every situation and encounter one has. The ability to create and make an impression showing positive attitude and self-confidence is the key to one's success whether it is professional or personal. An individual needs to be sure of himself or herself before trying to inspire others. Having the confidence that one is capable, worthy, courageous and assertive despite the person's circumstances is what self-esteem portrays.

An individual is not born with any certain level of self-esteem or confidence. What one feels about oneself is developed early in life as messages from family, friends, media, and culture are presented and that automatically begins to shape the way the individual sees him or herself including the world around. Depending on whether one had a pleasant or unpleasant childhood and growing up experiences, one needs to be comfortable with oneself and do the best to have a healthy self-worth. Any view one has about oneself takes one to adulthood therefore one needs to learn to deal with it as much as possible. Self-acceptance is paramount in the journey through life and in growing healthy self-esteem.

In other words, the importance of healthy self-esteem for the foundation of an individual's existence cannot be underestimated. Self-esteem is important because it has an impact on one's life decisions and choices. An individual desiring to work hard in pursuit of a better life brings to mind one whose self-esteem is high; living creatively and using his or her potential

(Brain, 2009). That is to say that if self-esteem is enhanced in secondary school students, it will enrich students' creative abilities and also elicit the best out of their characters. Be it as it may, not all secondary school students have attained this level of development and as such, the researcher believes that those who have not, need counselling.

Guidance and counselling as a global term is defined as a process of helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological potentialities and thereby achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness.

In other words, with guidance and counselling one discovers his or her potential in educational, vocational and social aspects of development which will culminate into personal happiness or fulfilment in the end. This is achievable because guidance and counselling are carried out by trained guidance counsellors who are equipped with different counselling skills and techniques with which to help individual clients discover themselves.

Guidance and counselling refers to the services and programmes that promote personal, social, educational and career development. Through guidance lessons and counselling, students are helped to overcome social or behavioural problems. Students who have social problems are counselled and through behaviour medication, they tend to improve on their negative behaviour traits.

The Guidance counsellors employ different strategies to ensure success in their work. The ability and knowledge of counselling strategies employed depend on their academic qualifications, abilities and experiences. The choice of these counselling strategies may vary between counsellors considering their experiences and differences in the way and manner they perceive and utilize them in the counselling relationship.

In this study therefore the researcher sought to find out counsellors' perception of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Some of the already existing counselling strategies which guidance counsellors are expected to choose from and are of interest to the researcher are cognitive restructuring, group counselling and Robinson's SQ3R method. The counsellors' choice depends on their perception of the available counselling strategies which they acquired during their training. They however improve on them as they utilize each of them in the one-to-one relationship, assisting clients to resolve the problems they meet in their growth process.

Cognitive restructuring is another strategy of choice for counsellors. It was propounded by a psychologist, Albert Ellis in the 1950s, based on the earlier work of others and it is a core component in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Group counselling is vital in counselling sessions where individuals who have similar experiences or issues come together to meet with a professional therapist. The counsellor or therapist runs the session, but generally, everyone contributes their little quota to the issue(s) raised and listens to others as they make their contributions, (Mobile Friendly, 2016).

Robinson's SQ3R method is yet another counselling strategy that has academic correction in students and their self-esteem. Similarly, Krumboltz and Thoresen (1969) refer to Robinson's SQ3R method as a systematic reading strategy propounded by Robinson (1941). For

clarification, S represents Survey, Q represents Question, 1st R stands for Read, 2nd R stands for Recite, and 3rd R stands for Review.

What then can be done to salvage these young people and channel them towards the right direction in life? If truly children's vulnerability requires adult intervention, protection and support and if one of those needs is the capacity to develop 'self'; which group of adults can be entrusted with such responsibility? Counsellors' perception of counselling strategies as a topic, however, is simply directing the responsibility of counselling the students out of the depleting state of vulnerability they find themselves to guidance counsellors in schools. This is re-echoed in the National Policy on Education (2013).

The researcher considered some variables such as guidance counsellors' experiences, location of schools and gender respectively to see how they can affect counsellors' perception of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. Concerning experiences, Denga (2001), in a related study found out that hardly can guidance counsellors with little or no experience were able to apply counselling strategies during counselling sessions.

Guidance counsellors in schools, however, have acquired adequate qualifications and work experiences at different levels. The minimum qualification is a first degree while some have strived to obtain a Masters (M.Ed) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in guidance and counselling respectively. These are currently in the services of the state Government within the Ministry of Education under the Post-Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB).

Unfortunately, according to the Educational Services Department, Guidance and Counselling Division of the P.P.S.M.B, Enugu (2015), secondary schools in Enugu state have 105 guidance counsellors in the 291 government-owned secondary schools in the state. This to a very large extent is likely to hinder the work of counselling in secondary schools in Enugu State. This means that most secondary schools in the state are likely not to have trained counsellors who are competent and qualified to handle the problems students face in their growth process. The few trained ones are overworked as they try to reach out to vulnerable youths in schools. Some schools are yet to enjoy the presence of guidance counsellors and so may not even know their functions. Guidance counsellors are experts in applied psychology and professionally trained to take care of educational, vocational and socio/personal aspects of client's life.

With regards to location, research carried out by DuBois (2002), recorded that environment plays an important role in determining trajectories (developments) of secondary school students' self-esteem. The school as it were is regarded as a 'gateway', where almost every child is expected to pass through to become respectable citizens in the society. Guidance counsellors operate in these schools which are located either in the urban or rural environments.

Regarding gender, Baumeieter (2003), carried out research with the findings that a wide range of Western countries have determined that adolescent females on average have a sense of self-esteem than adolescent males. Females generally tend to link self-esteem to the quality of their relationships while males link self-esteem to their achievements. Incidentally, the guidance counsellors in this study are both males and females.

The researcher identifies the gap in this study as determining counsellors' perceptions of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The argument has been that guidance counsellors have not come to grips with the strategies that enhance self-esteem among secondary school students. Guidance counsellors need to show their perception of the given counselling strategies as this will encourage stakeholders like teachers and principals who are concerned adults and responsible for the educational, vocational and social developments of secondary school students in Enugu State to have confidence in them. This will go a long way in creating awareness that will eventually help the stakeholders to have a good understanding of how the issue of self-esteem can be tackled. Students' self-esteem, however, comes under the personal/social component of guidance and counselling. Since self-esteem affects all facets of individuals' lives, seeking to boost or enhance it in young people is a deserving task that this study has sought to take care of.

It was seen by Shallcross (2012) that utilization of counselling strategies by a guidance counsellor is related to his attributes. Unfortunately, the subjective perception of counselling strategies by counsellors may influence the counsellors' choice of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem in students. These differences in perception and application of counselling strategies may influence the outcome of counselling interactions with students regarding self-esteem enhancement. If all guidance counsellors understand and perceive counselling strategies in similar ways and apply them accordingly, there will be no challenge in the application and outcome of the counselling relationship. This is the crux of this study which tried to ascertain counsellors' perception of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Regarding this study, 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 guidance counsellors have a vague perception of strategies that enhance self-esteem among secondary school students as their employers (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. 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 pursuits but this might become an illusion unless it is equally nursed and nurtured by counsellors who have a clear-cut perception of strategies that enhance self-esteem. It is against this background that this study was undertaken. The problem of this study is therefore, put in a question form, "What are counsellors' perceptions of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?"

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out counsellors' perceptions of counselling strategies for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Specifically, the study aims at;

1. determining counsellors' perception of cognitive restructuring as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State,
2. ascertaining counsellors' perception of group counselling as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State,
3. determining counsellors' perception of SQ3R Robinson method as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?
2. How do guidance counsellors perceive group counselling as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?
3. What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on the SQ3R Robinson method as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Research Method

Research Design

The researcher adopted the survey research design for this study. According to Nwogu (2006), the survey research design is one in which a group of people or items are considered to be representative of the entire group being studied and the findings are generalized to the whole group. Survey research design is best suited for this study because it permits the collection of original data and description of its condition as they exists in their natural setting. It also helps to homogenize the population and affords all the respondents an equal chance of being chosen.

This study was conducted in all the six education zones of Enugu State with a total of 291 Government-owned secondary schools. These zones are Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo Afor and Udi.

Enugu State became the choice area for this study because there are numerous educational challenges among the secondary school students in the state. These challenges have not only affected the academic performances of secondary school students, they have also affected their relationships with others. The general social problems these students manifest daily show the state of their thought lines. From observation, they lack confidence and to a great extent, secondary school students find it extremely difficult to assert themselves. These and other traits that are in the negative are found manifesting in the lives of young people leading them constantly to low academic pursuits.

To put a check on the devastating character traits that accompany a lack of self-confidence, the self-esteem status of secondary school students became a necessary concern to the researcher.

The population for this study comprised 105 practising guidance counsellors in all the 291 government-owned secondary schools in the 6 Education zones of Enugu State (Source:

Educational Services Department, Guidance and Counselling Division P.P.S.M.B, Enugu, 2015).

The population of 105 guidance counsellors is a manageable number therefore; the researcher used all of them for this study. As such no sampling was done.

An instrument developed by the researcher called the Counselling Strategies for Enhancing Self-Esteem Scale (CSESES) was employed in collecting data for the study. It is self-reporting and has two sections A and B. Section A contains 3 items designed to elicit personal information from the respondents. Section B is divided into 5 parts and contains 25 items structured to answer the research questions. The response format for the instrument is a 4-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Each response option has a numerical value assigned to it as follows:

Strongly Agree	(SA) =	4 points
Agree	(A) =	3 points
Disagree	(D) =	2 points
Strongly Disagree	(SD) =	1 point

The respondents were requested to tick the options that best match their opinion on each item. An introductory letter stating the reasons for the study was attached to the instrument for the respondents (See Appendix A).

To ascertain the face validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the instrument to two experts in the Guidance and Counselling Department and one in Measurement and Evaluation. These experts are all from Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu.

To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, the researcher used the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. The researcher conducted a trial test using 20 guidance counsellors from Ebonyi State owned secondary schools, (10 males and 10 females). This served as a similar population for the study. During the trial test, the researcher administered the instrument once to the respondents with an introductory letter acquainting them with the rationale for the study. The respondents were assured of complete confidentiality of all the information they supplied. The respondents that had time were allowed to complete the instrument on the spot, while appointments were booked with those that were busy for collection at a later day agreed upon by the respondents and the researcher. Finally, out of the 20 copies of the instrument distributed during the trial test, the researcher was able to retrieve 17 duly filled copies (85% returns).

The researcher used the Cronbach Alpha method of establishing the reliability of an instrument to analyze the data collected. As a result of the fact that section B of the instrument is divided into 5 parts, each treating a different aspect of the study, the researcher used the above method of establishing reliability to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained for part 1 is .73, part 2 is .81, part 3 is .68, part 4 is .67 and part 5 is .72. The researcher then ascertained the reliability coefficient of the entire instrument and found it to be .72. The researcher regarded the coefficient as high and so decided to use the instrument to collect the much-needed data for the study.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on cognitive restructuring (which is an aspect of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy) as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean Perception Scores (X) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Guidance Counsellors on Cognitive Restructuring as a Counselling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

N = 96

S/ N	Cognitive Restructuring as a strategy for Enhancing Self Esteem among Secondary Decision School Students are based on:	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	
		4	3	2	1			
1	Knowing they can change their negative thinking pattern	5	11	19	61	1.58	0.89	Disagree
2	Dropping irrational thoughts for rational ones	49	27	13	7	3.22	0.94	Agree
3	Developing self-confidence	47	33	9	7	3.25	0.90	Agree
4	Having a change of feelings	27	54	9	6	3.06	0.79	Agree
	Grand Mean					2.77		Agree

Results from Table 1 showed that the respondents agreed with 3 out of the 4 items raised (2, 3 and 4) as guidance counsellors' perception of counselling strategies that are related to cognitive restructuring as appropriate for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State. The respondents' mean scores for these items 3.22, 3.25 and 3.06 are above the cut-off points. They were accepted as agreed based on the decision that their mean ratings were more than the cut-off point of 2.50. The Table showed that the respondents disagreed with the remaining 1 item (1) with 1.58 as their mean score. Their standard deviation is small in all the items signifying that the respondents' responses are homogenous. The table also indicated a grand mean score of 2.77. Based on the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents' data, the answer to research question 1 is that Cognitive restructuring is an effective counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

Research Question 2: How do guidance counsellors perceive group counselling as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean Perception Scores (X) and Standard Deviation (SD) of Guidance Counsellors on Group Counselling as a Counselling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

N = 96

S/ N	Group Counselling as a strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among XSecondary School Students are Decision based on:					X	SD	SD	
		4	3	2	1				
5	Helping the group's negative self-talk by applying 'stopping techniques'	51	21	19	5	3.22	0.94	Agree	
6	Logically stating reasons for students to become more passionate about themselves	43	29	16	8	3.11	0.97	Agree	
7	Stressing the need to be focused	3	23	33	37	1.91	0.86	Disagree	
8	Assisting students to be goal-oriented	41	34	19	2	3.18	0.82	Agree	
	Grand Mean							3.18	Agree

Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed with 3 out of the 4 items raised (5, 6 and 8) on guidance counsellors' perception of group counselling as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State. The respondent's mean scores for these items are 3.22, 3.11 and 3.18. They were accepted as agreed based on the decision that their mean ratings were more than the cut-off point of 2.50. The Table showed that the respondents disagreed with the remaining 1 item (7) with 1.91 as their mean score. Their standard deviation is small in all the items signifying that the respondents' responses are homogenous. The table also indicated a grand mean score of 3.18. Based on the guideline for the interpretation of the respondents' data, the answer to research question 2 is that group counselling is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of guidance counsellors on the SQ3R Robinson method as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean Perception Scores (**X**) and Standard Deviation (**SD**) of Guidance Counsellors on SQ3R Robinson Method as a Counselling Strategy for Enhancing Self-Esteem among Secondary School Students in Enugu State.

N = 96

S/ N	SQ3R Robinson Method as a strategy for Enhancing Self Esteem among Secondary School Students are based on:	4	SA 3	A 2	D 1	SD	X	SD	Decision
9	Encouraging students with realistic plans		7	11	29	49	1.75	0.92	Disagree
10	Helping students to adopt time-tabling as a way of improving study habits		36	45	12	3	3.18	0.77	Agree
11	Assisting students in learning how to read systematically		3	6	36	51	1.59	0.74	Disagree
12	Encouraging students to acquire the skill of writing down sets of questions		24	54	12	6	3.00	0.79	Agree
13	Encouraging students to read with the Intent of remembering		42	36	6	15	3.06	1.06	Agree
	Grand Mean						2.51		Agree

Of the 5 items that make up SQ3R Robinson's method is a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students. Guidance counsellors in Enugu State rated all of them positively as their mean scores (3.18, 3.00 and 3.06) are well above the cut-off point of 2.50. They however disagreed with 2 of the items (9 and 11) with mean scores of (1.75 and 1.59). Their standard deviation is small in all the items signifying that the respondents' responses are tightly clustered around the mean. This shows that the respondents' responses are similar. Table 3 also indicated that the respondents recorded a grand mean score of 2.51.

Concerning the decision rule, the answer to research question 3 is that guidance counsellors perceive counselling strategies that conform to the SQ3R Robinson method positively as those for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Conclusion

1. Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy is perceived by Guidance counsellors as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
2. Cognitive restructuring is perceived by guidance counsellors as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
3. Group Counselling is perceived by Guidance Counsellors as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.
4. Guidance Counsellors perceive the SQ3R Robinson method as a counselling strategy for enhancing self-esteem among secondary school students in Enugu State.

Recommendations

Based on the implication of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should be encouraged by the Ministry of Education to market guidance and counselling education to candidates during orientation of New Year 1 students especially those who are not too sure of the courses they are to offer.
2. The Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) should assist teachers who hitherto have been serving as school counsellors by appointment to acquire a university education in guidance and counselling for self-improvement.

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