Effect of Counseling Based Social Skills Treatment of Secondary School Students with Skills Deficit in Chanchaga Suburb of Minna, Niger State of Nigeria

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Abstract- The study was designed to investigate the effect of Counselling in promoting the social skills of secondary school students who are socially challenged based on the adapted socialability questionnaire measures. Experimental design and cluster sampling were employed with a sample size of 205 subjects. It was found that no significant difference existed between pre-treatment scores of the two schools but there was positive treatment effect on the pre-treatment and post-treatment measures of the experimental and control groups at 0.05 level of significance. In addition post treatment social skills scores of students with low skills showed significant improvement at 0.05 level of significance. It was recommended that social skill dimension of educational delivery which is sub-summed in the affective domain of Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of behavioural objectives be made more prominent. Also counsellors should be employed and provided the resources and authority to add value to school practice.

Index Terms- Social skills, counselling, deficits and treatment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social skills is at the base of meaningful positive interaction with people. Greshan and Elliot (1984) defined it as socially acceptable learned behavior that enable a person to interact with others in ways that elicit positive responses and assist in avoiding negative responses. Wingert (2002) asserts that researchers now know that success in life and personal happiness depends, to a great degree on an individual's "emotional intelligence" - the ability to function well in a group and to form meaningful relationship. Hope Finch and McConnel (1983) said that the ability to form effective and meaningful social relationship has long been considered critical to human development. The Nigeria National Policy on Education states as one of the national educational goals:

The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2004:8).

Nigeria Government through her policy on education has acknowledged the need and importance of social competencies in human development. A cursory view of Nigeria public life points severally to the need for increased social capacities. Marital conflicts, work-place rivalry and weak team spirit/work, religious and ethnic conflicts etc. indicates social skills deficits.

A social skills deficit perspective assumes that specific identifiable skills form the basis for socially competent behavior and that interpersonal difficulties may arise as a result of a faculty behavior repertoire (Bellack and Hersen 1979 and McFall 1982). Some children or teenagers are drawn to peers and seem to thrive on social interaction whereas others appear rather unsociable and even withdrawn. Hartup in Wingert (2002) said that;

Children, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously at risk (P:103).

Invariably poor social skills could result in difficulties in interpersonal relationships with peers, teachers and parents. It could generate highly negative response from others to lead to high level of peer rejection. It can compromise the intellectual growth that usually results from group studies or group discussion and academically inspired peer consultation.

O'Connor (1972) examined the contributions of shaping procedures to symbolic modelling. His finding indicated that modelling alone increased social interaction. Evers and Schwarz (1973) attempted to replicate and extend O'Connor's work and found that modelling, with or without contingent teachers' praise increased positive peer interaction. Also improvement above post-treatment levels resulted for both groups at follow-ups.

Lad (1981) in a study of specific verbal skills training is remarkable in its demonstration of changes in both behavioural and socio-metric indicators of social competence. Studies by Lagreca and Santogrossi (1980) indicated that skills-training group improved in skill knowledge, role play performance and behavioural observations of initiation of peers relative to the attention-placebo and waiting-list control groups. Odoemelan (1994) investigated the relative effectiveness of social skills training, conversational skills training and modelling on some behavior problems and found the treatments to be successful in reducing and minimizing the problems. The problems included: inability to learn, inability to maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with people, inappropriate types of behaviours, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression etc. Gerler (1985) posits that interpersonal skills was generally effective with elementary students. The efficacy of classroom-based social-competence programmes is also supported in the work of

Weissburg, Caplan and Harwood (1991). They concluded that the short-term benefits of social skills training have been established for preschool, elementary, middle and high school students (Erford, 2007).

This study is essentially about how to enhance the social skills of secondary school students in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious setting. The two schools are co-educational public schools. The study will involve the grouping of the sample into subjects that will be exposed to counselling treatment and the control group. The effectiveness of counselling will be determined. The overall objective of the study is to provide basis for formalization of the remediation of social skills challenges via counselling in Nigerian schools.

II.   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study is about secondary school adolescents who are socially challenged. The primary target group for social skills intervention are students with low socio-metric status particularly those who show evidence of poor social competence like shyness, social withdrawal, under assertiveness, isolation from peers, anxiety and lack of reinforcement from peer interaction and excessive aggression. The study is designed to achieve the following ends:
(i)   Identification of secondary school students with low social skills
(ii)   Determine the effectiveness of counselling based treatment of social skills enhancement

III.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide basis for the formalization of social skills remediation programme for secondary school students who are socially challenged through the counsellor, as an important school personnel. The specific objectives include:
(i)   Determine the existence of the problem of social skills deficit in secondary school students
(ii)   Determine the effect of counselling inspired social skills intervention with a view to enhance the adjustment of secondary school students at risk of social challenges.

IV.   RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research questions guided the study
(i)   Are there social skills deficit in secondary schools?
(ii) What is the extent of social skills deficits in secondary school students?
(iii) What will be the difference in the social skills of student in terms of pre-treatment and post treatment measures?

V.   HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.
H0$_1$:   There is no significant difference in the pre-treatment social skills status of students in the two schools.

H02: There is no significant difference in the pre-treatment and post-treatment social skills scores of secondary school students exposed to counselling based treatment and those not exposed to the treatment
H02:   There is no significant difference in the pre-treatment and post-treatment social skills measures of secondary school adolescents with low social skills after a circle of counselling session.

VI.   METHODOLOGY

The study is experimental and employed the randomized subjects pre-test post-test control group design.

Population and Sample

The population consists of secondary school students in Chanchaga suburb namely:
(i)   Government Day Science Secondary School, Chanchaga - Minna
(ii)   Government Day Secondary School, Chanchaga - Minna

The focus is on first year senior secondary school students i.e. SSS one. Part of the basis for choice of these schools is the presence of Guidance Counsellors and the ethnic heterogeneity of the schools.

Cluster sampling was used to select a classroom that served as experimental group and another classroom as control group in each of the two schools. A sample size of 205 was drawn from total school population of 1,534 year one students of the two schools.

Instrument for Data Collection

The socialability questionnaire used derives from two instruments namely:
(i)   The socialability questionnaire: an index of skill, designed by Jonathan Berent' and associates.
(ii)   Self-esteem inventory by Stanley Coppersmith of the University of California.

Validation of Research Instrument

Face validity of the instrument was achieved through inspection and corrections by three professors of counselling psychology who rated the instrument as capable of yielding appropriate measures for testing the hypotheses.
The reliability was ascertained through test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered to year one students of Army Day Secondary School, Minna twice with an interval of three weeks. The Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to calculate reliability coefficient index of 0.87.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher in collaboration with two counsellors in each of the schools administered the questionnaire for each school, questionnaires was responded to in the class at the same time by all subjects but there was no time limit and there was no opportunity for students to consult fellow students. They were assured that there were no rights or wrong answers. Subjects had

the opportunity to seek clarification from test administrators on any item that was not clear to anyone of them.

Treatment Procedure

The treatment or experimental groups were exposed to nine (9) sessions of the social skills programme. It was a five (5) week of two sessions per week treatment programme for the experimental group (N = 97) except for the 5th week which had one session. The period of treatment was 11th February 2017 to 14th March 2017. During the treatment period students were instructed on the basis of the guide lines provided in the social skills programme which clearly spell out in a user-friendly fashion, aspects such as; the topic, specific skills to be developed in the subjects, objectives, introduction, activities designed to bring about the development of the identified skills and assignment to help the subject practice the skills.

Areas of social skills covered include conversation, group entry or joining an ongoing activity, smile and have fun, assertiveness, social problem solving, cooperation, complimenting, awareness of feelings and good sportsmanship.

Grading and Interpreting the Results

When grading the test, assign each correctly answered question a value of one (1). The correct answer implies what a socially well adjusted person will give as answer.

The following table will serve as a general guideline for determining social skills status:
Low social skills status: 21 and below
Medium social skills: 22 – 34
High social skills status: 35 – 44

VII. THE RESULTS

Hypotheses one: There is no significant difference in the pre-treatment social skills measure of students in the two schools.
Table 1: t-test comparison of pre-treatment social skills scores of the two secondary schools.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-calculated	t-critical	DF
Government Day Science Secondary School	101	20.81	4.87	0.42	1.96	
Government Day Secondary School	104	20.51	4.40			203

P. <.05

The mean $(\bar{x})$ of social skills score of Government Day Science Secondary School, Chanchaga is 20.81 while that of the Government Day Secondary School, Chanchaga is 20.51. The t-calculated of the analysis of the mean is 0.42 while that the t-critical is 1.96 meaning that the t-calculated is less than the t-tabulated. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the pre-treatment social skills scores of the two schools (i.e. GDSS and GDSS) is not rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the pre-treatment and post-treatment social skills scores of secondary school students exposed to counselling based social skills treatment and those not exposed to the treatment.

Table 2: t-test comparison of the social skills status of control and experiment group of secondary school students.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-calculated	t-critical	DF
Control group	108	26.96	5.65			
Experimental				2.78	1.96	203
Group	97	28.60	5.34			

P. < 0.05

The mean $(\bar{x})$ of the control group, that is, subjects that were not exposed to treatment is 26.96 while that of the experimental group, that is, subjects that participated in the counselling based social skills treatment is 28.60. The calculated t-test value is 2.78 while the t-critical is 1.96 implying that the t-calculated is greater than the t-tabulated. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the social skills status of secondary school students exposed to treatment and those not exposed to treatment is rejected at 0.0.5 level of significance. In other words, there is significant difference in the social skills of students exposed to counselling based social skills treatment when compared with that of students not exposed to the treatment.

Hypothesis three: there is no significant improvement in the social skills status of secondary school students with low social skills after a circle of counseling sessions.

Table 3: t-test comparisons of pre-treatment and post-treatment social skills measures of secondary school students with low social skills.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-calculated	t-critical	DF
Pre-test low	23	19.04	2.39			
Post-test low	23	21.35	4.93	2.63	2.07	22

P.< 0.05

The mean of pre-treatment social status score of subjects with low social skills status, that is, subject with a score of 21 and below, is 19.04 while the post-treatment mean of the set of students is 21.35. The t-calculated is 2.63 while the t-critical is 2.07 meaning that the t calculated is higher than the t-critical. Therefore the hypothesis that states that there is no significant improvement in the social skills measures of secondary school students with low social skills after a circle of counselling session is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. In other words there is a significant difference in the pre-treatment and post-treatment scores of secondary school students with low social skills on account of the counselling based social skills programme.

VIII. Discussion of findings

No significant difference was found in the pre-treatment social skills measures of the two schools with means of 28.81 and 28.51 suggesting a generally medium social skills rating. However standard deviations of 4.87 and 4.40 respectively suggest a likely gab between students with relatively high social skills and those with low skills. This narrative confirms the need for social skills training as expressed in the Nigeria National Policy on Education that part of the educational goals should be the development of social competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. Therefore the educational goal is as appropriate and germane as ever.

Significant difference was found in the social skills measures of students exposed to the counselling based social skills treatment when compared with that of subjects not exposed to the treatment. In other words there was positive treatment effect for the experimental groups compared with control group. This implies further significant contribution to the pool of social skills research on adolescents such as the works of O'Reilly and Glynn (1995), Gerler (1985) and Weissburg, Caplan and Harwood (1991) which showed that teaching more general social skills to adolescents might also be effective at promoting social skills of subjects. This study further confirms that social skills enhancement programmes when deliberately planned and carefully implemented can remarkably improve the social skills of adolescents who may be socially challenged.

The difference in the pre-treatment and post-treatment mean scores of social skills of the students with low social skills was significant. This showed the effectiveness of the counselling based social skills programme. This result corroborate the findings of Odoemelan (1994, 2006) O'Connor (1972) and Evers and Schwarz (1973) who reported improvement even above post-treatment assessment level, that is, at follow-up stage therefore providing bases for the generalizability of acquired social skills.

IX. Conclusion

The resourcefulness of guidance and counselling in addressing the social skills challenges of secondary schools students is not in doubt. The conditions in the schools are a far cry from the minimum standards set in the educational policy.

For example, counsellors were given teaching responsibilities, some are serving as examination officers in addition to membership of committees, meanwhile the counsellor – student ratio is within the region 1:2,000 or above. The prevailing waste in schools in terms of the gap between years spent in school and the functioning capacity of products of school is partly a reflection of our insensivity to research initiative and findings.

X. Recommendations

Teachers, counsellors, educational psychologists and other relevant school personnel should be encouraged to develop tests for assessment of social skills needs of learners. The prevailing practice of little or no emphasis on the affective domain in the statement of behavioural objectives should be discouraged through responsive supervision and need-based retraining.

The study has shown the need for more effort to design appropriate user-friendly social skills programmes for boys and girls that can be used by teachers, counsellors, parents and even learners as a form of self-instructional module.

Full-time counsellors should be provided in schools as prescribed in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) The study also revealed the need for constant retraining of counsellors to help up-date their knowledge and skills in keeping with contemporary development.

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