



Assessment of the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State

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Abstract

This study Assessed the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State. The study adopted a 2x2 factorial matrix pretest-posttest; control group quasi-experimental design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 90 (ninety) male and female secondary school truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State who have consistently absented from school twenty days each in first and second term school sessions without permission from six randomly selected public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. The participants were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The treatment group was exposed to eight-weeks Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy training, while participants in the control group received no training. One validated instrument: Students' School Attendant Behaviour Questionnaire ($\alpha = 0.82$), was used for data collection. Two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) and Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA). There was significant main effect of treatment in the pretest/post-test school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in the experimental and control groups ($F(2,87) = 42.583, p < .05$). Also, gender has significant moderating effect on school attendance behaviour pre-post scores of truants from divorced parental background between male and female students from divorced parental background ($F(2,87) = 11.95 (P < .05)$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The MCA result showed that the mean score for the male truant students is ($= 22.39$) while that of the female is ($= 22.69$). This shows that female students exhibited less truant behaviour and positively improve in attending school than male students after treatment. Therefore, School authorities should often give students orientation on the need to always seek counselling support services from their school counsellors to support their positive adjustment to teaching and learning experience in school.

Keywords: Assessment, Behaviour, Divorce, Gender, Lagos, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, Truants, School

Introduction

The primary goal of Nigerian educational system is to develop potentials that would impact positively on well-being of students and national development. The school serves as a formal channel for the attainment of this and this is why students are encouraged to attend classroom teaching and learning interactive activities regularly with focussed mind set and creative attention. However, some students do fall short of meeting up with these expectations as they tend to express truant behaviour towards attending school due to some devastating developmental phenomenon they might be experiencing at home due to marital divorce of their parents'. This makes occurrence of divorce in families among couples with children a fundamental issue of grave concern because of its compounding negative effect on the education and general wellbeing of children (The Centre for divorce education, 2023).

Therefore, assessing measures that can be used to modify their behaviour positively becomes necessary. Ihekweba and Osuala (2022) hypothesize that assessment is a process of gathering and documenting information usually in a measurable term about the achievement, skills, abilities and personality variables of an individual. Furthermore, they stated that assessment can focus on individual learner, the learning community, the institution or educational system as a whole. Also, it is used in both educational and psychological setting by teachers or researchers to accomplish a range of objective (Ihekweba & Osuala, 2022).

From the early twentieth century to present daily life experience, one of the most prominent ways that divorce affects children's education is through its psycho-socio-emotional impact. During experience of divorce among couples, children often experience a range of strong psycho-socio-emotional challenges, such as confusion, fear, isolation, sadness, anger, guilt, helplessness, frustration and socio-educational maladjustment. These feelings can be overwhelming, making it harder for children to focus on their schoolwork and engage actively in the classroom (The Centre for divorce education, 2023). The center for longitudinal studies (2019) report affirmed that divorce has consequential negative impact on the level of parental involvement in a Child's education as their experience tend to make most divorced parents have less emotional strength to invest in the educational progress and parenting of their children. Agukwe-Oluoma (2021) opined that parental divorce is associated with poor school attendance and low academic performance because witnessing divorce conflicts between parents heightens a level of stress and confusion on children and prevent them from focusing on their school work.

Turkish statistical institute (2021) report on behavioural disposition of children with divorced parents in late childhood and early adolescence showed that an average 16 percent drop out of school, have psych-emotional challenges and an 8 percent rise in behavioural troubles in the short term. Spector-Dunsky (2022) found that high school withdrawal rates for students who reside with both parents were considerably less than for teens with single divorced parents. Spector-Dunsky, argued that the dropout ratio is approximately twice as high for any student teen in a family type different from a two-parent intact family. The conventional wisdom is that children of middle and high school ages from divorce parents face many difficulties, ranging from difficulties such as aggressive behaviour, delinquency, frustration, poor school attendance, academic failure, etc. Chimienti, (2021) averred that on average, middle school students from divorced parents are slightly poorer in term cognitive ability compared with students who live in intact families. Divorce is painful for the whole family. While adults grapple with their feelings and the logistics of separating lives, children are left trying to understand and adjust to a radically new family dynamic, questioning their place in the situation. While each child and family are unique, and not all children react to divorce the same way, it's vital to understand potential changes to better support children during this transition. This makes investigating effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State while considering the moderating impact of gender timely and a necessity.

Mbagwu et al. (2018) simply defined school truancy as irregularity in school attendance. However, truancy which is a deliberate act of not attending school without permission may be due to diverse reasons such as poor parental supervision, engagement in hawking, peer influence, psycho-socio-emotional factor, etc. Research indicates that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) has

consistently served as a counselling modality to help manage truancy behaviour and help truants unlearn irrational beliefs that has made them express truancy maladaptive behaviour and adopt rational thinking patterns which will bring about desirable school attending behaviours (David et al., 2019). In REBT, irrational beliefs are considered to be significant contributors to psycho-socio-emotional disturbances (David et al., 2019). The main objective of REBT is to facilitate the attainment of adaptable and healthy emotional and behavioural reactions by teaching individuals how to think more logically when faced with challenges and uncertainties of life (Armstrong, 2020). For example, Safyanu, et al (2019) empirically investigated the effectiveness of Reality and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapies in the treatment of truancy among Secondary school students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria and reported that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) had significant main effect in reducing act of truancy among students exposed to treatment.

Another study was carried out by Amuda et al. (2019) found that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy was effective in managing expressed maladaptive and truancy behaviour among students from single parent families.

The use of REBT techniques in treating psycho-socio-emotional challenges, such as truancy, bullying, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, has been shown to have significant advantages in the literature (Ede et al., 2022; Suresh, 2021). REBT intervention programmes have been found to protect students of divorce homes from developing more severe psycho-socio-emotional and mental health problems (Xu & Liu, 2017). In a recent study on the impact of REBT on management of maladaptive behaviour among students with learning disabilities who are not attending school regularly, it was discovered that participants' attitudinal disposition to not attending school regularly significantly reduced after exposure to REBT intervention programme during the post-test and follow-up than they were for participants who did not receive such exposure (Ugwu et al., 2022). However, Onongha, (2020) reported that the involvement in truancy behaviour by gender differ significantly across family types and further stated that between males and females' students from divorced and separated family, male secondary school students were more involved in truancy behaviour than their female student colleagues. Nigerian researchers have reported that both male and female secondary school students are involved in truanting behaviour (Mbagwu et al., 2018; Obiunu & Ozuri, 2018) but truancy is more pronounced among male students.

Abdul-Aziz (2019) study examined the prevalence of truancy and its associated factors among 1500 school-going adolescents using the 2015 Mozambique Global School-based Student Health Survey data. The association was assessed using bivariate (Chi square) and multivariate (logistic regression) analysis. The prevalence of truancy was (38.4% of males and 35.1% of females) indicating higher prevalence among male students. This finding is not strange however, as male adolescents are prone to truancy than the female adolescents (Adika, 2016). Also, Nurawinata et al. (2022) differences in students' truancy in terms of gender and age in Indonesia and found that the frequency of truancy among male students was higher than female students. Based on this context, this study is hinged on Self-determination theory (SDT) which is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people's innate growth tendencies and innate psychological needs. It projects motivation behind individuals' choices of action based on self-motivated and self-determined drive for success. The level of motivation determines a persons' ability to endure and strive to attain success while pursuing set goals (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This makes this theory appropriate for this study.

Statement of the Problem

The experience of parental divorce on the educational and developmental wellbeing of students can be devastating and frustrating. This challenge can impair their intellectual functionality and psycho-socio-emotional relationship with their peers and significant others within and outside school learning environment. Their inability to comprehend the reason for their parental divorce and the step to take for positive adjustment could make them feel helpless, dejected and become truants by exhibit irregular school attendance behaviour. This is why this intervention is carried out.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study is to investigate effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State while considering the moderating impact of gender and to specifically:

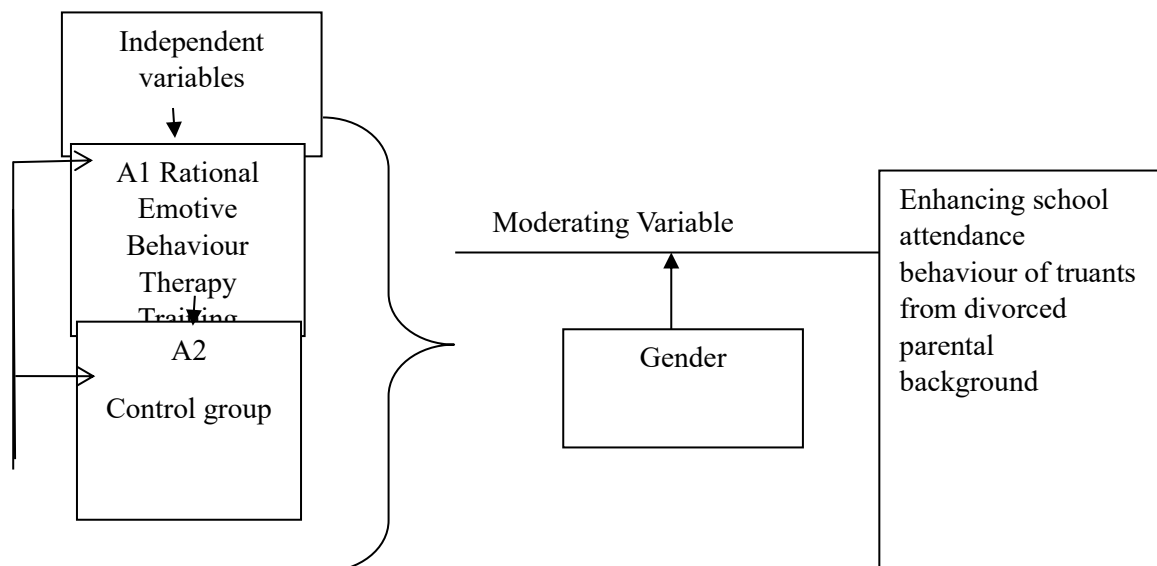
1. Determine if Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy treatment programme effectively enhance school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State.
2. Ascertain if the moderating impact of gender enhances school attendance behaviour of male and female secondary school truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State

Research Hypotheses

In this study the following hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant main effect of treatment in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State.
2. There is no significant main effect of gender in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State.

Figure 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE STUDY



Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a pre-test, post-test control group quasi experimental design with 2x2 factorial matrix consisting of two rows of the treatment programme of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and Control Group (non-treatment group). There are also two columns denoting the levels of gender of truants from divorced parental background that is male and female participants. The psychological therapeutic treatment is coded as thus: Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy Training (A1), and the Control Group (A2) constitute the row of the treatment design and the columns represent level of gender of male truant participants represented by B1 and females represented by B2. This is highlighted in table 1 below.

TABLE 1: 2x2 Factorial Matrix Quasi-Experimental Design for the treatment enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background considering the moderating effect of Gender

Treatment			Total
	Male	Female	
A1 Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy Training	A1 B1n=26	A1 B2n=19	45
A2 Control Group	A2 B1n=28	A2 B2n=17	45
Total	n=54	n=36	90

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The participants for this study are 90 (ninety) male and female secondary school truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State who have consistently absented from school twenty days each in first and second term school sessions without permission were purposively selected from six randomly selected public secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Instrumentation

The following instruments were used in the study.

Secondary School Students' Daily Attendance Register Records: This record gives account of their daily school attendance behaviour. Only students' that have consistently absented from school twenty days each in first and second term school sessions attendance register records without permission were purposively selected.

Students' School Attendant Behaviour Questionnaire was used to measure the students' school attendant behaviour. It is researcher made questionnaire with 8 items. For example, it has items such as: "I attend school regularly"; I skip school without permission"; I do not feel happy attending to school"; etc. It is a 4-point Likert rating response pattern questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.82 gotten through a test-re-test method.

Procedure

The researcher got permission to carry out this research from Principals of the schools randomly selected for the study. Students selected through the support of their class teachers were given adequate orientation concerning the essence of the study and through this measure the researcher got their consent. Three secondary schools were used for this study. Two of these schools served as treatment groups and one as control group. Secondary school students in the treatment group were exposed to 8weeks treatment training programme and those in the control group were not exposed to any form of training. All groups were given pre-treatment and post treatment assessment.

Control of Extraneous Variables

The researchers used randomization in placing participants of the study into groups as a measure to control possible extraneous variables that might affect the results of the study. Likewise, to control the Rosenthal effect participants in the control group were kept busy by engaging them with their normal daily school routine work during the experimental sessions. Also, other possible contamination and measures beyond the reach of the design that can affect the result of the study were controlled by the use of ANCOVA statistical tool appropriate for the study for analysis.

Method of Data analysis

ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) was used as the statistical tool for the study. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare the differential effectiveness of the treatments. In order to know the direction of the difference and to ascertain the amount of variations due to each independent variable, a Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was carried out

Results

Hypothesis One

There is no significant main effect of treatment in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State.

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Pre-Post Test Interactive Effects of School Attendant Behaviour Scores of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State Nigeria in the Treatment Groups and Gender

Source	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.	Remark
Covariates	2162.813	1	2162.813	58.146	.000	
Main effects	3216.112	2	1608.056	43.232	.000	
Treatment Groups	3167.813	2	1583.907	42.583	.000	Sig.
Gender	889.109	2	444.555	11.952	.001	Sig.
2-ways Interactions	171.112	3	57.037	1.533	.645	
Trt Group x Gender	907.008	2	453.504	12.192	.000	Sig.
Explained	5046.221	12	420.518	11.305	.000	
Residual	2864.125	77	37.196			
Total	7910.346	89	88.880			

*Significant at 0.01 (2tailed) ** Significant at 0.05 (2tailed)

The result in table 2 showed that there was significant main effect of treatment in the pre-test/post-test school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in the experimental and control groups ($F(2,87) = 42.583, p < .05$). This implies that the treatment programme significantly had effect on the mean post-test school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background exposed to treatment. This indicates that secondary school students from divorced parental background exhibiting truancy behaviour exposed to treatment in the experimental groups benefited from the treatment package as they were able to manage their maladaptive truant behaviour and improve on their school attendance behaviour better than those in the control group that were not exposed to any treatment package. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. In order to find out the magnitude of groups mean scores; Table 3 is presented below.

Table 3: Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) showing the direction of the results in the Pre-Post school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in the Treatment Groups and Gender.

Variable + Category	N	Unadjusted variation	Eta	Adjusted independent covariates deviation	for +	Beta
Grand Mean = 22.56						
Treatment Groups:						
Rational Emotive Behaviour	45	5.07		2.94		
Control	45	-3.14		-3.15		
			.71			.83
Sex:						
Male	54	-.17		-.61		
Female	36	.13		.73		
			.22			.29
Multiple R-squared						.681
Multiple R						.716

The MCA as observed in Table 3 shows that school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy training experimental group had the highest adjusted school attendance behaviour posttest mean score ($\bar{x} = 27.63$) while the Control group had the least adjusted school attendance behaviour posttest mean score ($\bar{x} = 19.63$). Therefore, the result indicates that the impact of divorce experience on truancy behavior of secondary school truants from divorced parental background is much more on students in the control group. These values were obtained by adding the grand mean ($\bar{x} = 22.56$) with the respective adjusted deviation. The table also indicated that treatment accounted for as much as 68 percent ($MR^2 = 0.68$) of the variance of the participants school attendance behaviour scores while the remaining 32 percent are due to other unexpected sampling errors.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant main effect of gender in enhancing school attendance behaviour of truants from divorced parental background in Lagos State. Table 2 shows that gender has significant moderating effect on school attendance behaviour pre-post scores of truants from divorced parental background between male and female students from divorced parental background ($F(2,87) = 11.95$ ($P < .05$)). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The MCA table 3 showed that the mean score for the male truant students is ($\bar{x} = 22.39$) while that of the female is ($\bar{x} = 22.69$). This shows that female students exhibited less truant behaviour and positively improve in attending school than male students. This further implies that male students from divorced parental background are more prone to truancy than female students. This is attained by adding the grand mean ($\bar{x} = 22.56$) to the unadjusted variation figure of male and female students.

Discussion of the Findings

The result of the first hypotheses showed that there was significant main effect of treatment in the pre-test/post-test school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in the experimental and control groups ($F(2,87) = 42.583$, $p < .05$). This implies that the treatment programme significantly had effect on the mean post-test school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background exposed to treatment. This indicates that secondary school students from divorced parental background exhibiting truancy behaviour exposed to treatment in the experimental groups benefited from the treatment package as they were able

to manage their maladaptive truant behaviour and improve on their school attendance behaviour better than those in the control group that were not exposed to any treatment package. The MCA as observed in Table 3 shows that school attendance behaviour scores of secondary school truants from divorced parental background in Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy training experimental group had the highest adjusted school attendance behaviour post-test mean score ($\bar{x} = 27.63$) while the Control group had the least adjusted school attendance behaviour post-test mean score ($\bar{x} = 19.63$). Therefore, the result indicates that the impact of divorce experience on truancy behaviour of secondary school truants from divorced parental background is much more on students in the control group. These values were obtained by adding the grand mean ($\bar{x} = 22.56$) with the respective adjusted deviation. This further attest to the fact that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) has consistently served as a counselling modality to help manage truancy behaviour and help truants unlearn irrational beliefs that has made them express truancy maladaptive behaviour and adopt rational thinking patterns which will bring about desirable school attending behaviours (David et al., 2019). In REBT, irrational beliefs are considered to be significant contributors to psycho-socio-emotional disturbances (David et al., 2019). The main objective of REBT is to facilitate the attainment of adaptable and healthy emotional and behavioural reactions by teaching individuals how to think more logically when faced with challenges and uncertainties of life (Armstrong, 2020). For example, Safyanu, et al (2019) empirically investigated the effectiveness of Reality and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapies in the treatment of truancy among Secondary school students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria and reported that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) had significant main effect in reducing act of truancy among students exposed to treatment.

Also, the study found that gender has significant moderating effect on school attendance behaviour pre-post scores of truants from divorced parental background between male and female students from divorced parental background ($F(2,87) = 11.95$ ($P < .05$)). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The MCA table 3 showed that the mean score for the male truant students is ($\bar{x} = 22.39$) while that of the female is ($\bar{x} = 22.69$). This shows that female students exhibited less truant behaviour and positively improve in attending school than male students. This further implies that male students from divorced parental background are more prone to truancy than female students. This is attained by adding the grand mean ($\bar{x} = 22.56$) to the unadjusted variation figure of male and female students. This corroborates the findings of previous researchers. For example, Abdul-Aziz (2019) study examined the prevalence of truancy and its associated factors among 1500 school-going adolescents using the 2015 Mozambique Global School-based Student Health Survey data. The association was assessed using bivariate (Chi square) and multivariate (logistic regression) analysis. The prevalence of truancy was (38.4% of males and 35.1% of females) indicating higher prevalence among male students. This finding is not strange however, as male adolescents are prone to truancy than the female adolescents (Adika, 2016). Also, Nurawinata et al. (2022) study on differences in students' truancy in terms of gender and age in Indonesia found that the frequency of truancy among male students was higher than female students.

Conclusion

School counsellors should ensure they utilize the benefits of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy theoretical postulations in modifying maladaptive truancy behaviour among secondary school students.

Recommendations

1. Truants in secondary schools should be exposed to counselling intervention training programmes that will help them develop the capacity to manage and overcome their truancy maladaptive behaviour so as to start attending school regularly.
2. School authorities should often give students orientation on the need to always seek counselling support services from their school counsellors to support their positive adjustment to teaching and learning experience in school.
3. During parent-teacher association meetings, parents should be made to understand the need for them to support and monitor the educational and developmental wellbeing of their children.

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