

BEHAVIOURAL MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS IN CONTROLLING INDISCIPLINE AMONG SECONDARY STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

EGENTI, UJU P. (PhD)

**Department of Educational Foundations
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria
Email: favouuju4real@yahoo.com; up.egenti@coou.edu.ng
Phone No. +2348037860587**

&

NWAMMA, BLESSING AMARA

**Phone No. +2348037419963
Email: nwanmaamara@gmail.com**

Abstract

The study investigated the behaviour modification techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. The study was guided by two research questions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised the school counsellors in all the 262 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Proportionate sampling technique was used to draw sample of 108 school counsellors for the study. The researcher-developed instrument titled ‘Behaviour Modification Techniques for Controlling Indiscipline Questionnaire ‘BMTCIQ’ was used for data collection. BMTCIQ was face validated by three experts; who are lecturers, two in the Department Educational Foundations and a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. Cronbach alpha was used for test of internal consistency of the instrument and the reliability indices obtained for Clusters I and II were 0.77 and 0.80 respectively with an overall coefficient value of 0.79. The researchers together with four research assistants collected data for the study and a 95 percent return rate of the instrument administered was recorded. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The findings of this study revealed among others that counseling techniques is applied by school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Ministry of Education should organize in-service training for school counsellors to acquire more knowledge and skills in applying counselling technique for controlling indiscipline.

Keywords: Behaviour, Modification, Technique, Indiscipline, and Counsellors

Introduction

Education is an indispensable instrument for transmitting sound knowledge, requisite skills and exploring ideas that empower individuals to positively contribute to the development of the society. It also instills right attitudes and mould character in accordance with societal norms

and values. Livala, Bulus, Daver and Livala (2021) stressed that it is an instrument par excellence that is geared toward the realization of human aspiration which is expected to lead to better human relationship, effective citizenship, national consciousness and development. Students acquire formal education in the school system. Omote, Thinguri and Moengan (2015) noted that schools through the curriculum provide children with basic intellectual skills and opportunity to achieve social and vocational abilities which are necessary in making one a socially useful and economically productive member of the society. The school system cannot succeed in developing self-respect, integrity and honesty among students in learning environment where acts of indiscipline are prevalent. Odebode, (2020) asserted that the school system which is medium for transformation of individuals' lives and to impart knowledge, skills and values is faced with the problem of students' indiscipline.

Indiscipline is an unacceptable behavior. It is an act that deviates from moral conduct. Odebode (2020) defined indiscipline as one's inability to adhere to laid down rules in any establishment or society. Indiscipline acts are contrary to rules and regulations of school as well as the value and norms of the society. According to Omote, Thinguri and Moengan (2015), indiscipline is any mode of behaviour, action and conduct which do not conform to acceptable and stipulated standards. The acts of indiscipline include: lateness to school, disrespect for rules and regulations, disrespect to constituted authorities, cultism, indecent dressing, fighting, drug and substance abuse among others. Similar to this, Kesui, Manduku and Sang (2017) identified indiscipline cases of students as follow: destruction of school property, drug abuse, alcoholism, early teenage pregnancies, abortions, truancy, dropping out of school and stealing among others. Onuorah and Ibekwe (2016) pointed out that most times peer influence pushes the adolescent into engaging and exhibiting undesirable behaviours such as sex and drug abuse, rioting, bullying, truancy among others. Continuing, Onuorah and Ibekwe also asserted that other forms of indiscipline include: stealing, examination malpractice, noisemaking, fighting, lateness, drug abuse, sex abuse, truancy, cultism, violence. Similar to this, Obi, Obineli and Akpojivi (2019) pointed out that many societies and schools consider behavioural problems such as delinquency, truancy, absenteeism, bullying, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, smoking and early patterns of sexually acts to be serious disciplinary problems. To avert the acts of indiscipline, it is essential to utilize some behavioral modification techniques.

Behaviour modification has been conceptualized by different scholars in varying ways. According to Achi and Eremie (2018), behaviour modification is the techniques used to try and decrease or increase a particular type of behavior or reaction.). Behaviour modification techniques are the systematic strategies of altering and shaping learners' behaviours. Behaviour modification techniques aim to manipulate the antecedents and consequences of behaviour so that the likelihood of appropriate behaviour is increased and inappropriate behaviour is decreased (Sharma, Malawade & Shrikhande, 2018). There are several behavioural modification techniques. Musa (2016) noted that behaviour modification techniques for changing aberrant behaviours are referrals, punishment, time-out, counseling and reinforcement. The interest of this study is on counselling and reinforcement techniques because they are fair means of controlling indiscipline.

Counselling is the act of providing professional assistance to help individuals resolve their behavioural, emotional and other problems. Similar to this, Eremie and Bethel-Eke (2020) conceptualized counselling as a collaborative process that involves the development of a confidential professional relationship that focuses on assisting and guiding clients to resolve especially personal, social, or psychological problems and difficulties. Obi, Obineli and Akpojivi (2019) defined counseling as the process whereby an individuals is helped through a relationship with a professionally prepared person to voluntarily change his or her behaviour, clarify his attitudes and goals so that his problems could be solved. Counselling can also be

applied to prevent minor behavioural problems from developing to more serious ones. Egenti (2020) noted that counselling helps the students by increasing their self-awareness, emotional growth and maturity. Furthermore, Egenti averred that it also empowers them to articulate their issues, understand their problems and also assist them to explore alternative solutions to their problems. Counselling techniques are indispensable means of assisting misbehaved students change their undesirable attitude through group interaction, appraisal, orientation and consultation of teachers or parents. It rests on the shoulders of school counsellors to help students overcome their behavioral challenges. Onyeachu (2010) asserted that school counsellors should use both individual and group method to counsel students on the negative effective of anti-social behaviour.

Reinforcement is the act of strengthen desired behaviour to be repeated or weaken an undesirable conduct. Igbo, Mezieobi, Ezenwaji and Onuorah (2016) defined reinforcement as that eventual phenomenon that increases probability of desired behaviour manifesting again. Reinforcement can be positive or negative. Positive reinforcement is any reaction that strengthens behaviour. Musa (2016) averred that a positive reinforcement involves responding to the child's behaviour with stimuli, which increases the likelihood that the person will make a similar response in similar situations in the future. One way of giving positive reinforcement in behaviour modification is in providing compliments, approval, encouragement, and affirmation (Vijayalakshmi, 2019). Positive consequences for good conducts are generally called reinforcers. Amuma and Idoli (2013) stressed that these reinforcers may come in form of material reward such as pencil, bic, ruler, edibles and other tangible items and non-material which may come inform of praise, clapping hand, smile and others. The material and non-material reinforcers can increase or decrease the change in the behaviour of the learners when properly handled by the school counsellors. On the contrary, negative reinforcement is any reaction that weakens bad behaviour. Bad behavior can be weakened through an unpleasant stimulus. Negative reinforcement reduces future frequency of bad behaviour. The essence of any form of reinforcement is to elicit change in behaviour.

There appears to be incidence of indiscipline such as lateness, sneaking out of school, absenteeism, fighting, absenteeism, examination malpractices, drug abuse, disrespecting school authorities, truancy, noise-making and bullying among others in secondary schools in Anambra State. Indiscipline noticed among secondary school students in Anambra State seemed to have generated worry and concern among researchers, government and education stakeholders. These acts of indiscipline appeared to have resulted into destruction of property and unsafe school environment which sometimes result into poor academic performance of students in examination. Many secondary schools have put in places several behavioural modification technique aimed at controlling indiscipline among students. Despite this, the cases of indiscipline seem to persist in secondary schools in Anambra State probably due to fact that these intervention strategies are not properly applied by school counsellors. Most school counsellors in Ananmbra State seemed not knowledgeable and skillful enough to apply behavioural modification techniques for the curbing of students undesirable behaviours like cultism, rioting, fighting, disobedience, sex abuse and cheating during examination malpractice among others. This prompted this study to determine the behavioural modification techniques(Reinforcement and Counselling) of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the behavioural modification techniques (Reinforcement and Counselling) of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine counselling techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State.
2. Find out reinforcement techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the counselling techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State?
2. What are the reinforcement techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State?

Method

Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is the design which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristic features or facts about a given population. The descriptive survey design fits into this study because the researchers collected data from a representative of the population to ascertain the behavioural modification techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised the school counsellors in the 262 public secondary schools in Anambra State. Proportionate sampling technique was utilized to draw 108 school counsellors as the sample size of the study.

The researcher-developed instrument titled “Behavioural Modification Techniques for Controlling Indiscipline Questionnaire “BMTCIQ” was used for data collection. BMTCIQ was face validated by three experts; who are lecturers, two in the Department Educational Foundations and a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. Cronbach alpha was used for test of internal consistency of the instrument. The data used for computing the reliability indices were obtained from copies of the questionnaire administered on 20 school counsellors in secondary schools in Enugu State. The choice of Enugu State was because secondary schools in Anambra and Enugu States share similar characteristics. The data obtained were subjected to test for internal consistency Cronbach alpha and it yielded reliability indices of 0.77 and 0.80 for Clusters I and II with an overall coefficient value of 0.79.

The administration of the instruments was done by the researchers together with four research assistants using direct administration method. A total of 108 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 103 were properly filled and successfully retrieved indicating 95 percent return rate. The other copies of the questionnaire were not successfully retrieved. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for answering the research questions and t-test for testing the hypotheses. For decision on the research questions, mean ratings that fall below 2.50 were taken as disagreement, while mean rating of 2.50 and above were taken to indicate agreement.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the counselling techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Counselling Techniques of School Counsellors in Controlling Indiscipline among Secondary Students in Anambra State

S/N	Item Description	School Counsellors (N =103)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision
1	Engage in dynamic interactions with group of erring students to modify their behaviour	2.78	1.02	Agree
2	Provide unruly students with information to enable them properly adjust their behaviour in school	2.64	1.11	Agree
3	Collect data on erring students progress to help them solve behavioural problems	2.43	1.03	Disagree
4	Develop referral intervention plan for modifying students' behaviour	2.60	1.08	Agree
5	Refer misbehaved student to a professional psychologist for behavioural modification	2.55	1.05	Agree
6	Monitor referral services render to unruly students for their behavioural modification	2.53	1.13	Agree
7	Promote healthy communication between misbehaved students to decrease the act of indiscipline	2.61	1.15	Agree
8	Create ample time to assist erring students overcome their problems	2.41	1.10	Disagree
9	Orientating the students on the right ways to behave	2.64	1.14	Agree
10	Contact unruly students in given interval to monitor their behaviour	2.42	1.04	Disagree
	Cluster Mean	2.56	1.09	Agree

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of school counsellors for items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 were above 2.50 indicating agreement with the items as their counselling techniques applied in controlling indiscipline among secondary students. The mean scores of school counsellors for items 3, 8 and 10 were below 2.50 indicating disagreement with the items as their counselling techniques applied in controlling indiscipline among secondary students. The pooled standard deviation score which stood at 1.09 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst school counsellors indicating a similar consensus of opinion. The mean of means score of 2.56 which is above 2.50 indicated that school counsellors apply counselling techniques for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What are the reinforcement techniques of school counsellors in controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation Scores on Reinforcement Techniques of School Counsellors in Controlling Indiscipline among Secondary Students in Anambra State

S/N	Item Description	School Counsellors (N =103)		
		Mean	Sd	Decision
11	Give gift items to well-behaved students to encourage desirable pattern of behaviour	2.65	1.04	Agree
12	Make positive verbal comments to encourage good conduct among students	2.91	1.10	Agree
13	Instruct students to kneel down for sometime	2.45	1.06	Disagree
14	Make use of warm facial expression to encourage the repeat of good conduct	2.71	1.00	Agree
15	Denial of erring students some privileges	2.52	1.07	Agree
16	Assign a portion of land for students to cut grass to discourage deviant acts	2.46	1.13	Disagree
17	Invite the parents of misbehaved students for discussion	2.61	1.08	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.62	1.07	Agree

Data presented in Table 2 showed that the mean scores of school counsellors for items 11, 12, 13 and 17 which are above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated agreement with the items as their reinforcement techniques applied in controlling indiscipline among secondary students. On the other hand, the mean scores of school counsellors for items 13 and 16 which are below the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated disagreement with the items as their reinforcement techniques applied in controlling indiscipline among secondary students. The cluster standard deviation scores of 1.07 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst their mean scores. The cluster mean of 2.62 which is above school counsellors apply reinforcement techniques for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State.

Discussion

The result of the study revealed that school counsellors apply counselling techniques for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. This is line with the finding of Kesui, Manduku and Sang (2017) who reported that counseling techniques are applied in secondary schools to deal with indiscipline cases. This also supported the finding of Onuorah and Ibekwe (2016) who revealed that counselling strategies are utilized by school counsellors for curbing secondary school students' undesirable behaviour. The possible explanation for this finding is probably due to fact that counseling techniques are applied to advice students on how to deal with disciplinary problems. The counselling techniques applied by school counsellors for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State include to: engage in dynamic interactions with group of erring students to modify their behaviour, provide unruly students with information to enable them properly adjust their behaviour in school, develop referral intervention plan for modifying students' behaviour, refer misbehaved student to a professional psychologist for behavioural modification, monitor referral services render to unruly students for their behavioural modification, promote healthy communication between misbehaved students to decrease the act of indiscipline and orientating the students on the right ways to behave. Through, counseling sessions, students can develop behaviourable problem-solving skills to deal with a particular act of indiscipline. Counseling students that deviate from the rules and regulation could help them change their attitude. Counselling can be employed to change undesirable behaviour among students without the need for disciplinary action.

The finding of the study revealed that school counsellors apply reinforcement techniques for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. This is consonance to the finding of Onyeachu (2010) who reported that reinforcement is applied as a technique to modify bad behaviours. The possible explanation for the agreement in findings could be due to the fact that the studies were conducted in the same geographical location. The reinforcement techniques applied by school counsellors for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State include to: give gift items to well-behaved students to encourage desirable pattern of behaviour, make positive verbal comments to encourage good conduct among students, make use of warm facial expression to encourage the repeat of good conduct, denial of erring students some privileges and invite the parents of misbehaved students for discussion. The possible reason for this finding is probably due to the fact that pleasant stimulus which follows a specific behaviour increases the probability of such behaviour being repeated and vice versa. A student who experiences positive enforcement often shows a greater willingness to demonstrate desirable behaviour. Punishing or frowning at certain negative behaviours of students can discourage them from such acts.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it was concluded that school counsellors apply behavioural modification techniques for controlling indiscipline among secondary students in Anambra State. Guiding the behavioural patterns of students through counseling and reinforcement techniques are essential for creating harmonious learning environment. Counseling and reinforcement techniques assist students exhibit acceptable attitude and desirable behaviour in accordance to school rules and regulations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that;

1. Ministry of Education should organize in-service training for school counsellors to acquire more knowledge and skills in applying counselling technique for controlling discipline among students in secondary schools.
2. Post Primary School Service Commission should develop functional guidance and counseling department in secondary schools through adequate funding and recruitment of more counsellors to help modify students' behaviour.

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