



EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND GENDER ON LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE COVID- 19 ERA AMONG GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring technique and gender on learning difficulties in the Covid -19 era among Government Secondary School Students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria. The study employed quasi-experimental of pretest and posttest group design, in which selected participants were assigned to treatment group. The population of the study consisted of one hundred and forty five (145) students with learning difficulties from senior secondary school (SS1), both male and females between the age of fourteen to sixteen (14-16) years. Stratified sampling technique was used to select two schools from two 2 Education Zones. Purposeful sampling technique was used in selecting the participants. The sample includes 15 students identified from their school records with the problems of learning difficulties were selected and used for this study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at $p < 0.05$ alpha level of significance. Independent t- test statistic was used for testing hypothesis one, Results from data analysis revealed that there is significant difference of Cognitive restructuring Technique on Learning difficulties among secondary school students ($t = 2.79$, $p = 0.011$). Hypothesis two was tested using ANCOVA statistic. It was revealed that there is significant difference of

cognitive restructuring Technique on learning difficulties between male and female government secondary school students in favour of male ($f = 4.13$, $p = 0.006$). It was recommended that school psychologists, teachers and counsellors should be exposed to training workshop on cognitive restructuring in readdressing learning difficulties more especially on female among students in government secondary school in Kaduna Metropolis among others.

Keywords: Cognitive restructuring, Learning Difficulties, Gender Covid -19.

Introduction

Secondary school students are often faced with several challenges that hinder learning. Such obstacles among gender are lack of teaching and learning materials, environmental factors, verbal unresponsiveness, emotional instability and stressful life conditions including Covid19 virus (Corona virus Disease 2019) as the most global health challenge of the century. The rate of learning for each individual varies; the differences in performance, general ability in traits may be more advanced as compared to others, some individuals possess general skills and techniques appropriate for learning while others ability traits required in tests is more suitable than others. Cognitive restructuring is an insightful behavioural procedure that emphasizes recognizing and changing negative thoughts and maladaptive beliefs. It is based on the assumption that cognitions are the major determinants of how we feel and act (Beck, 1999) and Aderanti and Hassan (2011) reported that cognitive restructuring is effective in the treatment of behaviour problems and disorderliness. However the most effective technique adopted by counselling psychologist for reducing learning difficulties is cognitive restructuring technique.

According to Adejumo (2010) Cognitive restructuring is a set of techniques for becoming more aware of one's thoughts and for modifying them when they are distorted or are not useful. Deacon, Fawzy, Lickel, Wolitzky and Taylor (2011), stated that cognitive restructuring would produce significant

improvement in the distress and believability associated with negative self-referential thoughts. Because cognitive restructuring is thought to be an acquired skills which benefits occur after repeated practice. It is also common that wrong decisions often result in catastrophic life-styles. The cognitive restructuring technique will be helpful for reducing learning difficulties among the low performing students. The therapy will aid in changing the beliefs and values of the participants so as to decrease the dependent variable (learning difficulties and to increased the in dependent variable (cognitive restructuring) as involved in the study. Learning difficulty is a generic term which encompasses learning problems including disability. Basically the three major types of learning difficulties have been identified .These include (i) Dyslexia-reading disability, (ii) Dysgraphia writing disability and (iii) Dyscalculia-maths disability in (Kenyon, 2003) .Retrieved (2010) Factors that lead to learning difficulties among the learners such are; lack of definite goals or activities outside schools and the rate of learning for each individual varies, the differences in performance and the general ability of the learner may be more advanced as compared to others Ani (2010) observed that some individuals posses general skills and techniques appropriate for learning while others ability required in tests is more suitable than others.

According to Diana (2013), Cognitive restructuring involves paying attention to thought, recognizing when they are irrational thoughts challenging them, and learning replacement thoughts and behaviors. Lack of role models and support, dull classes or uninspiring teachers that is to say some classes may be uninteresting or presented in such a way that students get bored or frustrated, laziness, poor relationship, poor study habits, excessive worry and negative personality trait, these negative personality traits can make study habits difficult or impossible.

Tambuwal (2010), stated that the problems associated with learning difficulties are difficulty in listening comprehension which involves an inability to receive oral language effectively .unusual difficulty in making or learning oral speech, difficulty in learning to read and write, unusual difficulty in visual motor co-ordination, difficulty in selecting attention and difficulty in sustaining attention, such obstacles affect students learning and performance., Similarly, the high rate of insecurity in the country also affect students and may leads to learning difficulties . Babatunde (2001), observed that national insecurity may mean organized crime or trade union activities of essential workers capable of destabilizing or endangering life and property such increases learning difficulties among the students.. According to Dauda (2016) physical structures in many schools, have collapsed other classes have been blown-off by wind and flood and such hinder learning and performance in many schools effectively, therefore lack of in proper ventilation emotional instability due to class size, may likely encourage school poor attendance that may leads to learning difficulties. The outbreak of problems in the Nigerian societies leading to destruction of students' behaviour in learning. Korb, (2010) agreed that the implications always be the closure of schools in Nigerian societies. Similarly Asikhia (2014) observed that schools with larger population have higher rates of absenteeism and such increases learning difficulties.

Cognitive restructuring technique is useful for helping client to learn the truth, act differently and thus gives self-treatment when the need arise (Junk and Stell, 2013: Calcium 2012: Boyes, (2013). Learning takes place when there is more or less a change in behavior that results from experiences. Bernardo (2012) stated that mind also has a network of symbolic knowledge stored in memory. The mind receives information of various forms and the appropriate operations and symbolic information stored in the system which will be used to transform the information. The transformation of information ultimately leads to cognitions, affective, beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Within this perspective, “learning”

occurs with the acquisition of new operations and symbolic knowledge or the restructuring of old operations and knowledge. According to Anderson, Blumfield, Pintrich, Clark, Marx and Peterson (2010) they are of the view that process of learning takes place as in stages: Input, processing, and output. Input occurs when the senses receive data from the environment. Peterson and Piaget in Dauda (2014) added that learning takes place because of schemas, through assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration; because the schemas allow individuals to make connections with the information they receive while assimilation is the process of absorbing new experiences from the environment. Reyes (2010) stated that accommodation is the integration of new experiences with the old formation while assimilation takes place when individuals incorporate information and accommodation occurs. Cognitive restructuring Caluag (2012) observed that teaching behaviors were supported by behavioral beliefs that teachers must be certain for the students to have the basic knowledge or skill upon which new learning to be built. When presenting a new task, teachers organize the material to be learned in small and sequential steps. He added that learners do not absorb information; rather they construct their own knowledge and skills by actively processing the information they acquired in various experiences and situations. However, learning can also be effective if an external agent such as teachers appropriate teaching facilities that facilitate advances goal for learning, provided that these goals are adopted by the students themselves. Atkinson, Smith and Bem, in Mangal (2011), added that learning is cumulative, students always bring a range of relevant knowledge and skills to any new learning situation; it is never a “tabula rasa” for the student. Students use their prior knowledge to structure and constrain future learning, thus, learning is self-regulated. The teacher cannot fully control the learning process, rather it is the student who undertakes the required steps to learn, who controls the learning process, who provides self-feedback and performance judgments, and who keeps oneself focused and motivated. Jane

(2000) emphasized that learning is goal-oriented and is best facilitated when the student is explicitly aware of the goals of learning particularly when the students determine their own goals.

Students learn by participating in community practices and activities, in other words, learning is socially mediated; the learner gradually constructs new knowledge in the process of interacting with a group of people who share in practice and use of this knowledge.

When learning difficulties is left unaddressed it can caused damage to students, potential and consequences of learning difficulties my lead to academic failure and increase the rate of students becoming nuisance in the society. In order to match the cognitive processes of the learners in order to improve learning , Anderson, Blumfield, Pintrich, Clark, Marx and Perterson (1995) in Ferguson (2014) devised the general principles for learning tasks. The tasks should provide multiple representations of key ideas across situations and also a set of tasks (though not necessarily every task) should feel authentic, representing as much as the complexity of the domain as is possible without overwhelming students. He also added that tasks should, engage students in explaining their own beliefs and considering alternative points of view in which tasks should create opportunities for public interaction among the students and between the teacher and the student. Also tasks for grading and assessing student learning should be authentic and congruent, based on these obstacles the researchers seek to find out the effect of cognitive restructuring technique and gender on learning difficulties in the Covid - 19 era among government Secondary School Students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of cognitive restructuring on learning difficulties among gender in Government Secondary Schools in Kaduna Metropolis?

2. What is the effect of learning difficulties on gender among secondary School Students in Kaduna Metropolis?

Hypotheses

1. Hypothesis (H01): There is no significant difference in the mean scores of pretest and posttest of cognitive restructuring technique and Gender on learning difficulties among Government Secondary Schools students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria
2. Hypothesis (H02) There is no significant difference in the mean scores of pretest and posttest of learning difficulties on cognitive restructuring on gender among Government Secondary Schools students exposed to treatment.

Methodology Research Design

Quasi-experimental of pretest and posttest were used for the study . The Quasi experimental design involves the manipulation of one or more dependent variables, but there was no random assignment of subject to conditions. The selection of quasi experimental design for this study was based on the advantage of testing the results obtained from post test in order to analyze the effectiveness or otherwise of the treatment when compared with the pre test score. The procedure of pre-test and post-test group (Gay, 2009). Design is diagrammatically represented in Figure 1

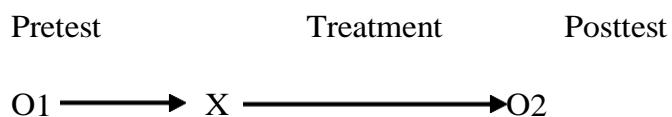


Figure 1: Research Design

- O1 = Pre – Treatment for Cognitive restructuring Technique
X = Treatment (Cognitive restructuring Technique)

O2 = Post – Treatment for Cognitive restructuring Technique

The design was preferred for the participants whom were chosen from (SS1) this is because the researchers were interested in knowing the effectiveness of in depended variable (Cognitive restricting technique) on the dependent variable (Learning difficulties)

Population of the Study

The population of the study was made up of one hundred and forty five (145) students males and females from senior secondary school (SS1) between the ages of 14-16 years from (5) Secondary schools in two (2) Education Zones in Kaduna metropolis .The Reason why they were chosen was based on the researchers experienced being to some secondary schools for research purposes, therefore only SS1 class was chosen from Government secondary school Hayin banki Kaduna, metropolis

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study was fifteen (15), participants; the study is in line with Okobiah in Dauda (2017) that the number for treatment group counselling can range is from 15 to 20. This sample is viable for Male and female with learning difficulties among Government secondary school students Hayin Banki Kaduna Metropolis. Hence participants were used due to gender variable involve in the study

Instrumentation

The research instrument contains the list of items to be responded by the participants to solicit for their views on a phenomenon (Fraenkel, & wallen, 2000). Researchers developed questionnaire titled “Effects of Cognitive Restructuring and Gender on learning difficulties among Government

Secondary School Students (EGORL) consisting of twenty (20) items developed by the researchers. It was a 5-point likert scale from Strongly Agree (5marks) Agree (4 marks), Strongly Disagreed (3 marks) , Disagree (2 marks) , and Undecided (1 mark) , pilot test was given to the respondents who were not part of the study at government day secondary school Samaru and instrument was validated accordingly. The reliability of the instruments yields a reliability co efficient of 0.81 respectively.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity of the instrument was established the face and arrangement of the items in the content of the work, the language used in relation to the ability of the participants, all were fully considered. The item in the instrument were validated by experts in the Department of Education Ahmadu Bello University Zaria,

Treatment

The treatments were as follow;

Participants were used in the pretest and later used for the posttest on (CRT)

The Pretest was administered to all the participants in the experimental group, the treatment was carried out for the period of six weeks involving (12) sessions, for effectiveness of the research, after the treatment was completed, the posttests were also carried out immediately on the sample (experimental group) all in the same sample school with the help of the research assistants .Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample for the study based on learning difficulty and the samples were the beneficiaries of the treatments in the study.

Treatment Procedure

Questionnaire on (CRT) was used for pre-test to ascertain those who could benefit from the therapy. It was also used as post-test to test the effectiveness of

the technique.

i) Pre- treatment Session

The researchers first visited the school for the purpose of meeting the Head Teacher of the school and request was made to the school for permission to see all the SS1 students and their teachers, or collecting their performance record for the purpose of the research.

Treatment Sessions

The treatments (cognitive restructuring) lasted for twelve sessions, each session lasted for 35 minutes. Tuesday was scheduled for treatment and sessions commenced before the period of the terminal examination and were rounded off after about six weeks. The post test was also taken a week before the commencement of their term examinations. Post-treatment Session

This is the final session of the treatment. At the end of the treatment, the Cognitive restructuring Questionnaire was administered to the participants with the view to determine the effectiveness of the technique on learning difficulties among the secondary school students in Kaduna metropolis.

Hypotheses Testing

In this study the null hypotheses were formulated and tested 0.05 alpha level of significance using independent t-test and ANCOVA for group comparison.

Hypothesis One (H01): There is no significant difference in the mean score of pre- test and post-test of cognitive restructuring technique and Gender on learning difficulties among Government Secondary Schools students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria.

Table.1: Independent t- tests Statistics for pretest and posttest on significant difference for cognitive restructuring technique on learning difficulties among Government Secondary Schools students in Kaduna Metropolis, Nigeria

Variable	Groups	n	Mean	Std dev	Std Err	Df	t-p
Cognitive Restructuring Techniques on Learning Difficulties	Pre test	15	8.40	.05	.09	14	2.79 0.011
	Post test	15	6.00	1.08	.41		

Significant and $p \leq 0.05$

The result on Table 1 cognitive restructuring technique and Gender on learning difficulties revealed that there is significant difference in the pre-test and post-test treatment. It was observed that the p value of 0.011 was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance while the t calculated value of 2.79 is higher than the 1.96 t critical at df 14. The mean of learning difficulties scores were 8.40 in the pre-test while in the post-test was 6.00 respectively, implying a mean reduction of 2.40, therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference of Cognitive restructuring Technique on learning difficulties among Government Secondary Schools students is hereby rejected.

Hypothesis Two (H02) There is no significant difference in the mean scores of pretest and posttest of Cognitive restructuring Technique and Gender on learning difficulties between male and female Government Secondary Schools students of those exposed to treatment.

Results

Table 2: ANCOVA Statistic on Mean Difference of Pretest and Posttest of Cognitive Restructuring Technique on Learning Difficulties on Gender among Government Secondary Schools Kaduna State, Nigeria

Subjects	sex	N	Pretest	Posttest	Mean	df	F	P	R
Male	8		4.87	2.12	2.75	13	0.220	0.63	
Mean	7		.00	4.87	1.04				
Cognitive R			SD 1.30	0.83					
						28	0.220.63		
Female		7		7					
Mean	7.71			6.00	1.71				
SD			1.11	1.41					

Result in Table 2 of the ANCOVA analysis in Table 2 showed that there is no significant differential effect of cognitive restructuring technique on learning difficulties between gender after exposed to treatment. Because the calculated p value of 0.63 is found to be greater than the 0.05 alpha level and the calculated F value of 0.22 is lower than the 2.60 f critical at df=29. It was shown that the effect of cognitive restructuring technique was 2.12 among males and 1.71 among females showing they are very close. This implies that the effect of cognitive restructuring is gender friendly. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in the mean scores of pretest and posttest of cognitive restructuring on learning difficulties among gender of those exposed to treatment is hereby retained.

Discussion

Based on the findings of the study the following discussion are made

1.This study found that there is significant difference in the mean score of pretest and posttest treatment level of learning difficulties among Gender students exposed to treatment cognitive restructuring this study is in lined with Shobola (2011),whose study find that's cognitive restructuring is effective in the treatment of all form of antisocial behaviors. therefore this technique help to promote more accurate and useful thinking, since the specific process of learning vary among students differences in prior knowledge, self-efficacy basic aptitudes, learning styles, learning potential, interests in learning, and beliefs about learning,

2. The study also found no significant difference between pre-test and post- treatment. Learning Difficulties exposed to treatment of Cognitive Restructuring Technique Between male and female Gender, because the hypothesis which stated significant difference is hereby retained. The effect of cognitive restructuring is gender friendly. Yahaya (2006) found that cognitive restructuring technique was effective as propounded by Ellis to modify clients' disturbed emotions and behaviours by disrupting the thought which directly creates stress that may increased learning difficulties. It also corroborates with Hassan (2011) who find that cognitive restructuring is effective in the treatment of anger that may lead to learning difficulty.

Beck (2005), disagree with findings he believes that psychological mechanism that plays a key role in the depression that list difficulty in learning is negative views about oneself according to Beck individual suppring from depression often possess negative self-schemas negative conceptions of their own trails abilities and behaviours

Cognitive restructuring technique is based on the assumption that an individual tends to think and learning occurs when a connection between a stimulus and response has been established and teachers most likely reinforce in order to increase the levels of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets that will enable an individual to be a productive in the global economy, cognitive restructuring technique should be employed and teachers should worked hard to make classroom activities pleasant and interesting.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it was concluded that males and Females with learning difficulties cannot try harder, pay attention and improve on their own, they need help to achieve their desire goals and therefore cognitive restructuring technique has the potentials for treatment of students with learning difficulties. Counselling psychologists' teachers parents should offer help to these victims improve their learning difficulties and meet their life aspiration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Students should be exposed to Cognitive Restructuring Technique to improve their learning and encourage them to develop confidence to excel in their academic performance. Appropriate Counselling intervention strategies should be put forward for students with learning difficulties among gender difference in Government Secondary Schools in Kaduna State.
2. School psychologists, counsellors and teachers should be encouraged to use Cognitive Restructuring Technique on re-addressing learning difficulties this will help to improve more especially on female student on their learning and develop confidence to excel in their

academic performance. Identified students with learning difficulties should be referred to the counselling psychologists to enable them acquire some skills that are required to handle their learning difficulties.

3. Equally to make the programme effective, seminars, conferences and symposium should be organized by psychologist, counselors and professional bodies to re-address the problems for classroom teachers on how to use these behaviour modification strategies to help in managing other unwanted behaviour problem among school adolescent.

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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND GENDER ON LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE COVID- 19 ERA AMONG GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND GENDER ON LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE COVID- 19 ERA AMONG GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND GENDER ON LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE COVID- 19 ERA AMONG GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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EFFECT OF COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND GENDER ON LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN THE COVID- 19 ERA AMONG GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KADUNA METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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