

RELATIVE EFFICACY OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY (REBT) ON MANAGEMENT OF DEPRESSION AMONG COLLEGES OF EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour therapy (REBT) on the management of depression among Colleges of Education students. Three research questions and two hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. A randomized control-group pre-test, post-test experimental design was employed for the study. The population for the study consisted of all students identified with depression in colleges of education in the north Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Three Colleges were selected to cut across two states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) out of the six states in the zone. A sample of 150 students were randomly selected out of the 900 students tested for depression to serve as the subjects for both experimental and control groups of the research. The instrument for data collection was adapted from Burns (1989) Depression Checklist and titled "Depression Checklist for College Students" (DCCS). The instrument was validated by three experts to establish both face and content validity. A pilot test of the instrument was done, and a test-retest method was adopted to establish the reliability index within three weeks' interval. A reliability coefficient of 0.84 was established. The research questions were answered by using percentage, mean and standard deviation

while t-test was applied to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that depression among college students was moderate, and REBT was found to be effective in the management of depression among the college students. REBT was also found to be effective in depression management after six weeks' follow-up. However, the study found no significant gender difference in the management of depression among the college students, REBT was recommended to professional counsellors, counselling psychologists for the management of depression, and anxiety among college students.

Keywords: Efficacy, Depression, Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, College of Education Students

Introduction

Teacher education is a significant programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teachers to meet the requirements of the profession and face challenges therein (Obioma, 2012). The success of this programme is vital for the attainment of quality education in Nigeria.

However, one major aspect of teacher education that demands attention is the mental health of the students.

Mental health is defined as a state of harmony among emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Keyes, 2012). World Health Organization (2012) defined mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals use their potentials to perform their duties properly, use the coping skills to deal with the stressors of life, and become an influential member of the community. Hence, mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness.

The teaching industry is one of the biggest in the whole world and is highly susceptible to physical and psychological health problems. While the physical component of the health of the teacher had received considerable attention in the past, the impact of their occupation on their psychological health had received little attention (Baldacara, et al, 2015)

Mental health problems can affect many areas of students' lives, reducing their quality of life, academic achievement, physical health, and satisfaction with the college experience, and negatively affecting relationships with friends and family members. These issues can also have long-term consequences for students, affecting their future employment, earning potential

and overall health (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007). Mental health problems can affect a student's energy level, concentration, dependability, mental ability, and optimism, hindering performance (Eisenberg, et al, 2009).

A substantial body of literature has shown a strong association between stress, anxiety and depression, and depressive and anxiety symptoms have been reported to commonly result from work or study place stress (Melchior, Caspi, et al, 2007; Wieclaw, et al, 2008).

Depression comes from the Latin word "deprimere" which means to press down or to bring down in spirit. It is triggered by feelings of sadness, pessimism, lethargy, irritability, and apathy (Musa, Isaac & Abigail, 2019). The term depression describes a wide range of emotional lows, from mere sadness to a pathological suicidal state (Nair, Paul & John, 2004). The World Health Organization [WHO] (2003) describes depression as a psychiatric disorder and the common mental illness of the present century, which characterized by feelings of sadness, crestfallen, disconsolate heavyhearted and miserable conditions. It a common mental problem encountered in day-to-day stress filled life. Usually, a person who is sad or feeling unhappy should return to normal emotional stability within a

reasonable period. There are times when this state of sadness or unhappiness may continue to such a degree and for such a length of time that it far outweighs the significance of the precipitating factor. The sufferer continues to be in a prolonged state of sadness and withdrawn from their personal, social, and occupational activities (WHO, 2011).

Scientific interest in student's mental health experiences has been increasing in the last few years due to their influence on students' learning processes, and academic performance. The percentage of students' experience on mental health issues such as anxiety, behaviour disorders and depression have continued to become more prevalent in the last twenty years (Evans, 2021). Trying to cope with so many new changes may cause some students to deal with depression. Students present significant risk factors for depression, since they need to deal with academic stress on a daily basis (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020).

There are several means of managing depression depending on types and severity. This study adopted the application of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the management of depression among Colleges of Education students. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis in 1950 and known as Rational Emotive Therapy until 1990 is when it became REBT (Froggatt, 2005). According

to Ellis, the human being is both rational and irrational. When he thinks rationally, he is happy, effective and lives a successful life. It is when he thinks irrationally that he becomes ineffective, unhappy and creates problems for himself. Thus, thinking brings about emotions and actions. Human problem is because of illogical thinking. Neuroses occur because of illogical idea held and perpetuated by individual, which influence his actions and leads to self-defeat (Akande, 2014). Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy distinguishes itself from other cognitive-behavioral approaches by placing irrational and rational beliefs at its core. In REBT rational beliefs are defined as beliefs that are flexible, non-extreme, and logical (i.e., consistent with reality), and in contrast, irrational beliefs are rigid, extreme, and illogical (i.e., inconsistent with reality). REBT is considered a new dimension in the treatment of psychological disorders as it underpins cognitive, emotional and behavioral deregulation (Amna & Tazvin, 2018).

There is a difference between this research work and others. Zada, Wang, Zada and Gul (2021) investigated effects of mental health on academic performance of students. Mohammad, et al (2019) conducted a survey on depression among university students, while Turner (2016) study was on Rational

Emotive Behaviour Therapy and mental health of athletes.

The research is designed to find out the relative efficacy of REBT on the management of depression among colleges of Education students.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher education is paramount to the quality of education in Nigeria because the teacher is considered the most important single factor in the success of the education enterprise. Thus, education has been said to be what teachers make of it. A competent, committed and professionally spirited body of teachers is the essential foundation for a good education system (Akande, 2022).

Depression can take a toll on student teacher well-being and their academic performance may suffer as a result. Some students even report feeling so depressed that it became difficult to function and go about their daily routine. Depression in college students can lead to unhealthy habits. Some turn to alcohol or substance abuse to deal with their stress and other negative feelings. It can increase toward the end of the semester when course loads and examination become more demanding. Even though depression in students is not strange, it is important to take it seriously. Depression can affect nearly every area of students' life: from studying and classes to their social life. In some cases,

depression can also cause suicidal thoughts or thoughts of self-harm. It is highly imperative to manage depression among students in Colleges of Education, if the desire to produce proficient, competent and psychologically balanced teachers are to be realized.

The problem of this study is to establish the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on the management of depression among Colleges of Education students.

Objective of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on the management of depression among College of Education students. In addition, the study was expected to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To find out the prevalence of depression among students in colleges of Education.
2. To determine the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the management of depression among College of Education students.
3. To determine the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the management of depression among College of Education students after six weeks of follow up.

Literature Review

The teaching profession in parts of Africa like Nigeria is relatively undervalued; hence teachers are frequently involved in industrial disputes and strike actions (Alabi, 1988; Ehusani, 2002; Agwom & Turaki, 2009). However, the Nigerian federal and some state governments are making concerted efforts to improve the condition of teachers.

The teacher is considered the most important single factor in the success of the education enterprise. Lassa (1993) was of the opinion that no system of education can rise above the quality of its teaching force; since the pivot of the educational system rotates around the teacher. For many years the importance of teachers as the main determinants of quality in education, particularly in developing countries, has been widely recognized (Ahmad, 2007). In appreciation of the role of teachers in the education process, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2014) acknowledged that no education system could rise above the quality of its teachers. Sharing the consensus that the quality of any education system depends very much on the competence, commitment and motivation of the teachers.

Teachers form the hub of the education process. It is in this context that teacher education becomes a matter of high priority. It is in realization of the critical role they

perform that the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) emphasized that teacher education shall be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development, since no education, system may rise above the quality of its teachers. Teacher education is considered to be a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teachers to meet the requirements of the profession and face challenges therein (Obioma, 2012).

The teaching industry is one of the biggest in the whole world and is highly susceptible to physical and psychological health problems. While the physical component of the health of the teacher had received considerable attention in the past, the impact of their occupation on their psychological health had received little attention (Baldacara, et al, 2015). Although teaching is recognized as one of the most stressful professions (Johnson et al 2005), psychological distress among trainee-teachers is less well recognized. This is probably because the stress of teacher training is seen by some as a normative part of becoming a qualified teacher (Murray-Harvey et al 2000). Ani, Kinanee and Ola (2011) reveal that there is a relative lack of research interest in the mental health of trainee teachers worldwide and especially in developing countries. This limited research interest is surprising, given

the large number of studies showing increased psychological distress among qualified teachers in several parts of the world. A recent study in England (Chaplain 2008) found high levels of stress among 38% of trainee teachers. An Australian study of 574 secondary school teachers found twice as much levels of stress compared with the general population (Punch & Tuettmann, 1990).

Excessive stress can be damaging to students' physical and mental health. Students' stress can arise from isolation from previous social support networks, frequent summative assessments, uncertainty and frustration with novel academic challenges, unrealistic expectations from parents and teachers and examination failure (Pabiton, 2007).

Increasing trend was found for the prevalence of depression among university students as well as in society. In a recent review, the frequency of depression among university students was reported to be higher than the general population. Among Malaysian students, the prevalence of moderate depression found 27.5% and 9.7% found as severe or extremely severe depression (Shamsuddin et. al, 2017). The finding is supported by Angelone et. al. (2011), various risk factors for depression among university students have been identified such as higher study year, lower socioeconomic status, poor academic performance and life satisfaction,

post-traumatic stress disorder, physical inactivity, overweight or obesity and sleeping problems.

Assessing the relationship between depression and quality of life is important for a broader understanding of the nature of diseases people are exposed to (Tang, & Thomas, 2020) Understanding how the different degrees of depression affect quality of life and whether quality of life interferes with the progression of the severity of depressive symptoms is necessary, since evidence shows that the trajectory of depressive symptoms vary within the same population (Shore, et al, 2018; Wilson, et al, 2015 & Ellis, et al, 2017). Depression affects the human emotion (excessive heartbroken), it affects the behavioral repertoire of the victims (loss of interests in one's usual activities), it affects cognitive ability (thought of been despaired and hopelessness) and it affects body functions (World Health Organization, 2016). Depression can affect many areas of students' lives, reducing their quality of life, academic achievement, physical health, and satisfaction with the college experience, and negatively affecting relationships with friends and family members. These issues can also have long-term consequences for students, affecting their future employment, earning potential and overall health (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007).

Not everyone experiences the same signs of depression. However, there are some signs that you can look out for: lack of energy, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, irritability, insomnia, sleeping too much, loss of appetite or overeating, loss of interest in activities that you enjoy, feeling guilty, hopeless, worthless, empty, sad, anxious, helpless, or restless, thoughts of suicide etc. (Robinson, 2023).

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy is a cognitive- and behaviour-based treatment. It is the pioneering form of cognitive behaviour therapy developed by Albert Ellis in 1955. Ellis hypothesized that irrational beliefs are the result of a person's goals or desires being inhibited or blocked. When we do not get or accomplish what we wanted to, we may develop irrational beliefs about ourselves or the world. (Ross, n.d.).

The main goal of REBT is to help people respond rationally to situations that would typically cause stress, depression, or other negative feelings. When faced with this type of situation in the future, the emotionally healthy response would be to realize that it is not realistic to expect success in every endeavor. All you can do is learn from the situation and move on. It is to improve the occurrence of healthy and adaptable emotional and behavioral reactions by teaching students to think more logically

when faced with hardship (Albert Ellis Institute, 2014)

A core concept of REBT is the ABC model. This model explains how, while we may blame external events for our unhappiness, our perception of these events lies at the heart of psychological distress. REBT is grounded in the idea that people generally want to do well and reach their goals. However, sometimes irrational thoughts and feelings get in the way of these goals. These beliefs are thought to influence how an individual perceives circumstances and events.

The ABC model is as follows:

[A] -Activating Event: The activating event or adversity is something that triggers you to form an irrational belief, such as being turned down for the position. It is the first step in developing an irrational thought because the irrational thought is formed to help the individual deal with the event.

[B]- Belief: This is the irrational belief that is formed in response to the activating event. This is a belief that you use to cope with the event, such as "I'm a loser, I'm useless, and I wouldn't be able to do the job anyway." While this is, of course, an incredibly hurtful thought, it can still be more comforting than having no idea why you did not get the job. Irrational beliefs are surprisingly easy to develop.

[C]- **Consequences:** this is the emotional response to the belief, usually distressing emotions resulting from irrational thoughts or beliefs. Irrational beliefs always have consequences, sometimes emotional, sometimes behaviour, and sometimes both. In this case, the consequences may be that the individual may lose their self-confidence or frequently feel sad.

REBT was found effective on the management of test anxiety, examination malpractice and also improving students' self-efficacy (Dakasku, Saleh & Lawan, 2021; Egbochuku, Obodo, & Obadan, 2008). REBT in group form was found to be an effective strategy in dealing with the distress caused by paranoia (Patterson, Semple, & Temoshok, 1995).

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the conduct of the research study:

1. What is the prevalence and level of depression among students in colleges of Education?
2. What is the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the management of depression among College of Education students?
3. What is the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in the management of depression

among College of Education students after six weeks of follow-up?

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were postulated as a follow up of the research questions:

1. There is no significant difference between the depression mean rating of student teachers exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (experimental) and those who are not (control).
2. There is no significant difference between the depression mean rating of male and female student teachers exposed to Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy

Methodology

The research design for this study was experimental design, which involved the treatment (experimental) group and control group. It is suitable for the study because only students identified with depression were involved in the study. It also gave room for comparison of rate of depression management in both treatment and control groups with respect to the efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on management of depression among Colleges of Education students.

The population for the study consisted of all students (student teachers) in Colleges of

Education in the North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. There are three (3) Federal and 11 State Colleges of Education in the North-Central Geopolitical Zone.

A sample of Three (3) Colleges of Education was selected using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques to cut across two (2) states and the Federal Capital Territory out of the six states in the zone. The selection also cut across the two categories

(Federal and State) of the colleges. NCE II (200 level) student teachers were purposefully selected for the study from each of the colleges involved. This is because they have been in the colleges for more than one academic year, and will readily be available unlike NCE III (300 level) that could be involved in teaching practice exercise. A total of 150 students were selected for the study after exposing 900 of them to depression checklist.

Table 1: List of Colleges of Education Involved in the Study

S/N	Name of College	Type	State
1	FCT College of Education, Zuba - Abuja	State	FCT
2	Federal College of Education, Okene	Federal	Kogi
3	Niger State College of Education, Minna	State	Niger

The instrument for data collection was adapted from Burns (1989) Depression checklist and titled Depression Checklist for College Students (**DCCS**). The DCCS was made up of two Sections A & B. Section A solicited personal information on the respondents, while Section B contained 15 items and a 0-4 rubric, where the respondents can score themselves on how they relate to the statements such as, “Not at All” (0), “Somewhat” (1), “Moderately” (2), and “A Lot” (3). The checklist has simple items (questionnaire) that takes a few minutes to

complete. After filling out the checklist, the final score helped the researchers to evaluate the severity of depression.

The instrument was validated through experts’ judgement involving three lecturers in Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, and Educational Measurement and Evaluation respectively. All the lecturers were not involved in the study; they were deliberately selected from the University. The experts established both face and content validity of the instrument. A pilot test was carried out at three (3) weeks interval to determine the reliability co-efficient of the instrument by subjecting the results to Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The instrument (**DCCS**) had a reliability coefficient of 0.84

The checklist (**DCCS**) was administered on all the NCE II (200 Level) students by the

researchers and four research assistants from the researchers' institution under the close supervision of the researchers. This was done twice. The first being Pre-test to be able to identify and select students that have moderate or severe level of depression for the experimental and control groups. The second administration was the Post-test done after the treatment package has been conducted.

The data collected were analyzed by using percentage, mean and standard deviations to analyze data on the research questions while t-test statistical analysis was applied to test the null hypotheses postulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

What is the prevalence of depression among students in colleges of Education?

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage Analysis of Prevalence of Depression among Students

Degree of Depression	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Minimal	29	3.2
Borderline	296	32.9
Mild	334	37.1
Moderate	232	25.8
Severe	09	01.0
Total	900	100.0

Table 2 shows that, out of 900 Colleges of Education students that were tested for depression, 37.1% had mild depression, while 32.9% were at the borderline. The table

also indicates that 25.8% had moderate depression and 3.2% had minimal depression. Only 1% had severe depression.

Research Question Two

What is the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in the management of depression among College of Education students?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre and Post-test of Depression

Group	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Drop
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Experimental (REBT)	75	26.4	2.2	16.6	2.4	9.8
Control	75	26.5	2.5	23.9	2.8	2.6
Total	150					
Mean Difference		0.1		-6.3		7.2

Table 3 indicates that students in the experimental group who had mild depression and were exposed to Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) had a pre-test and post-test mean scores of 26.4 and 16.6 respectively, with standard deviation of 2.2 and 2.4 respectively. The drop in the mean between pre-test and post-test was 9.8 The control group had a pre-test and post-test mean scores of 26.5 and 22.9 respectively, and standard deviation of 2.5 and 2.8 respectively. The drop in the mean between

pre-test and post-test was 2.6. the difference between experimental and control groups mean drop was 7.2 From the result in the table, it could be concluded that REBT is relatively effective in the management of depression among Colleges of Education students. However, to further verify if the notable difference in the mean scores of the two groups is statistically significant, hypothesis one was tested to arrive at a definite conclusion.

Research Question Three

What is the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in the management of depression among College of Education students after six weeks of follow-up?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Post-test and Follow-up Test of Depression

Groups	N	Post-test		Follow-up		Mean Drop
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Experimental (REBT)	75	16.6	2.4	15.8	2.3	0.8
Control	75	23.9	2.8	24.4	2.7	- 0.5
Total	150					
Mean Difference		-7.3		-7.6		1.3

Table 4 result shows that, the experimental group had a post-test and follow-up test mean scores of 16.6 and 15.8 respectively, with standard deviation of 2.4 and 2.3 respectively. The drop in the mean between post-test and follow-up test was 0.8 The control group had a post-test and follow-up test mean scores of 23.9 and 24.4

respectively and standard deviation of 2.8 and 2.7 respectively. There was an increase in the mean between the post-test and follow-up mean scores which accounted for -0.5 This by implication depicts that REBT is effective in the management of depression among Colleges of Education students after six weeks of follow-up.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the depression mean scores of student teachers exposed to Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (experimental) and those who are not (control).

Table 5: Test of Difference between Experimental and Control Groups

Groups	N	\bar{X}	SD	Std Error	df	t	sig
Experimental	75	16.6	2.4	1.05	148	-24.3	.000
Control	75	23.9	2.8	1.13			

Table 5 reveals that there is a significant difference between the depression mean scores of students exposed to REBT (experimental), ($t = -$

24.3, $p = .000$, $p < .05$) and those who are not (control). The stated null hypothesis is therefore, rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference between the depression mean rating of male and female student teachers exposed to Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy

Table 6: Test of Gender Difference in the Means of Experimental Group

Groups	N	\bar{X}	SD	Std Error	df	t	sig
Male	67	15.9	2.6	1.13	148	1.07	.064
Female	83	16.7	2.4	1.06			

Table 6 indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students exposed to REBT ($t = 1.07$, $p = .064$, $p > .05$). based on the result obtained, there was a slight difference in the mean scores of male

and female subjects. The male had a lower mean score than the female but it was not statistically significant. The stated null hypothesis is hereby accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The result on research question one shows that the prevalence of depression among Colleges of Education students is moderate representing 25.8% while majority (37.1%) had a borderline depression. This is contrary to Noushad et al (2014) report on prevalence of depression among college students which had 41.2% moderate depression. However, Shamsuddin, et al (2017) finding indicated 27.5% prevalence of depression among Malaysian students and 9.7% were found to have severe depression. The result of this study is heartwarming because only 1% of the students had severe depression. The researchers were of

the view that the type of orientation provided for colleges of education students (trainee teachers) may be responsible for the moderate prevalence of depression.

The study indicated that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy is effective in the management of depression among colleges of education students. The results on research question two and test of hypothesis one confirmed the efficacy of REBT in the management of depression. The finding is in line with the results of Saleh, Usman and Abass (2022), Dakasku, Saleh and Lawan (2021), Egochukwu, et al (2008), and Vernon (2007).

There was a significant improvement or reduction in the level of depression among students exposed to REBT. This is because they were intimidated with the effects of depression on their attitude which could also hinder their academic progress.

The study further shows that REBT is effective in the management of depression among colleges of education students after six weeks of follow-up. The result indicated that students in the experimental group continued to improve on the management of depression while the control group did not, rather they had a slight increase in depression level. The researchers were of the opinion that since REBT involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural deregulation, it must have assisted the experimental group in the continuous improvement.

The study found no significant gender difference in the management of depression among colleges of education students. This is in agreement with the report of Rahman and Melhim (2009) which indicated that REBT was not gender inclined as both male and female responded to REBT therapy almost the same way. This means that REBT is effective for both male and female students.

Conclusion

This study assessed the relative efficacy of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on the management of depression among colleges of education students in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study revealed that the prevalence of depression among the college students was moderate and REBT was

found to be effective in the management of depression among the students. The study therefore, concluded that REBT is quite efficient in the management of depression among college students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Professional counsellors, educational psychologists and counselling psychologists are enjoined to adopt rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy to manage depression, examination anxiety and stress among students.
2. Lecturers and teachers are encouraged to receive REBT treatment for management of stress and depression.
3. Workshops and seminars could be organised to update counsellors, teachers and psychologists on the efficacy of REBT in depression management.

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