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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER INFLUENCES ON SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING AMONG SOCIALLY MALADJUSTED YOUTHS IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Socially Maladjusted behaviour is perceived to be serious problem common among secondary school youths in Nigeria which ranges from truancy, aggression and low self concept to poor interpersonal relationship among others. The study investigated gender influences on the social skills training among socially maladjusted youths in Nigerian secondary schools. A 4x2x2 factorial quasi experimental design was used. The study made use of a total sample of 60 maladjusted youths selected randomly through simple and stratified random sampling techniques. A self designed instrument named social skills training was used. The subjects were assigned into one experimental group and one control group. Each group belongs to a school to avoid interference. ANCOVA was used to analyse the data generated, the result showed that social skills training was effective in the treatment of socially maladjusted behaviour of boys and girls when compared to those in control group. However, looking at the two results, social skills training was found to be much effective in correcting the socially maladjusted behaviour of girls than boys with the girls recording adjusted post-test mean score of 109.90 while boys recorded 79.03. In line with the findings of this study, it was recommended that social skills training programme should be consistently used for the female youths to help sustain the success already recorded in their training. Also, some specific socially maladjusted behaviour of male youths should be identified so as to know the aspect of social skills that will help them better.

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INTRODUCTION

Socially maladjusted behaviour problem is an everyday occurrence in Nigeria Secondary schools. It ranges from truancy, aggression, low self concept to poor interpersonal relationship. These behaviours have generated great concern among parents, school authorities, government and other concerned bodies. The reason being the consequential effect it has on learning development of individual students and the society at large. It is interesting to note that it may also interfere on the learning processes in the classroom and the peaceful coexistence in the school.

As reported by Drew and Watkins (1996), socially maladjusted behaviour could include: rebellious behaviour, disciplinary offences to attract attention, habitual truancy, regular use of foul language, bullying of others, resistance to school rules. It was also discovered that a student with low self concept is likely to cause problem behaviour in school than he or she with positive one. It was also suggested that negative self-concept would seriously interfere with students' academic and social functioning.

Experience in Nigeria today appears to suggest that there are threatening signals of danger to peace, health and unity of the country due to the maladjusted behaviour of youths. These behavioural problems could possibly be

traced to inadequate behavioural psychological principles. Bada (2010) submitted that successful social behaviour may lead to trust of self and other people. It will also enhance ability to cope with age mates and playmates without feelings of superiority. Encyclopedia of Mental Disorder (2013) perceived social skills training (SST) as a form of behaviour therapy used by teachers, therapists and trainers to help persons who have difficulties relating to others. It was also observed that a major goal of social skills training is teaching persons who may or may not have emotional problems about verbal as well as non-verbal behaviours involved in social interactions. SST is on the assumption that when people improve their social skills, they will raise their self-esteem and increase the likelihood that others will respond favourably to them. Social skills' training is aiming at improving participant's ability to function in everyday social situations.

A person who lacks social skills may have great difficulty building a network of supportive friends and acquaintances. As he or she grows older, many become socially isolated. Moreover, one of the consequences of loneliness is an increased risk of developing emotional problems or mental disorders. Weiten and Lloyd (2003) pointed out that therapists were of the view that humans are not born with social fitness, hence, people acquire their social skills through learning. Social ineptitude can contribute to anxiety, feelings of inferiority and other kinds of maladjusted behaviours. In the light of this, they submitted that, therapists were increasingly using social skills training efforts to improve clients' social abilities. Psychologists classify many of these social skills under the categories of cognitive self-regulation, self-discipline, effortful control (Blair and Diamond, 2008; Blair and Razza, 2007; Bull and Scerif, 2001; St. Clair-Thompson and Gather Cole, 2006). These skills include planning, sustaining attention, effortful control, task persistence. A second set of skills, often referred to by psychologists is "emotional self-regulation", includes the ability to control anger, sadness, joy, and other emotional reactions, which predicts both externalizing and internalizing problem behaviours (Campos, Frankel and Camras, 2004; Cole, Martin and Denniss, 2004; Raver, 2004).

Abundant literature revealed that boys have higher rates of developmental problems, disruptive behaviour, attention disorders, reading disabilities, and other related problems (Buch Mann, Di Prete, and McDannel, 2008; Muter, 2003). Understanding the etiology of socially maladjusted behaviour in young children is necessary for informing prevention efforts and, therefore, becomes an important health goal. Neuro developmental difficulties such as, uncontrolled temperament, inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity and low IQ are more strongly associated with socially maladjusted behaviour among boys than girls (Moffitt, Caspi et al 2001). Some factors such as cognitive deficit, environmental and genetical factors were however, being attributed to these behaviours among the youths.

The foundations of Autism Spectrum Disorders (2008) observed that social skills groups typically involve small groups of two to ten individuals with disabilities and a teacher or adult facilitator. According to the foundation, most social skills training groups can target: perspective taking, conversation skills, friendship skills, problem solving, social competence, emotion recognition and others. In addition, specific interaction skills, such as initiation, responding, maintain, greeting, giving/accepting compliments, turn taking, sharing, asking for help could be used to inculcate social skills. The suggestion then as inferred from the submission of the Foundations of Autism (2008) are that, when trainers apply social skills training to the treatment of socially maladjusted behaviours, they focus on the specific skills required to handle issues that emerge with each socially maladjusted behaviour. For example, in the treatment of low self esteem, aggression, truancy, interpersonal relationship, conflict solving, social skills may focus major skills such as self-acceptance, assertiveness, friendship, conflict solving and stress tolerance. Weiten and Llyod (2003) pointed out that social skills training is a behaviour therapy designed to improve interpersonal skills that emphasizes shaping, modeling and behavioural rehearsal. Precisely Lahey (2004) and Weiten and Llyod (2003) emphasized that social skills training depend on the principles of operant conditioning and observational learning.

Diprete and Jennings (2009) observed that a large and growing literature has documented the impact of social skills training on cognitive outcomes. They noted that psychologists classified many of these skills under the categories of either "cognitive self regulation or emotional self-regulation". "cognitive self-regulation" includes, planning, sustaining attention, effortful control of actions, inhibition of impulsive responses. "Emotional self-regulation" includes the ability to control anger, sadness, joy and other emotional reactions, which predicts both externalizing and internalizing problem behaviours. The idea here is that social skills training that is domicile in cognitive self regulation and emotional self regulation might be capable of handling the attended behavioural variables.

Hundert, Boyle and Cunningham (2000) made use of social skill (SS) and partner reading (PE) in treating youths' interpersonal relationship, inappropriate classroom behaviour, reading level and externalizing problem. The outcome showed that interpersonal relationship behaviour increased in all groups exposed to treatment to a greater extent than those in control group. NASP(2002) equally reported that primary mental health project was used to treat

youths with social and emotional problems that interfere with effective learning. The result revealed that, the treatment was effective at improving the social relationship, shyness, anxious behaviour and increase tolerance among the youths.

A large body of research from contemporary psychology revealed that behaviour varies with gender as contained in the report of Bar-on (1997) based on the North American normative sample. It was reported that, females appears to have stronger interpersonal skills than males, but the later have a higher intrapersonal capacity, they are better at managing emotions, and are more adaptable than the former. Specifically, Bar-on revealed that women are more aware of emotion, demonstrate empathy, relate better interpersonally, and are more socially responsible than men. On the other hand, men appeared to have better self-regard, are more self-reliant, cope better with stress, are more flexible, solve problems better and are more optimistic than women.

Social skills are prime suspect in producing gender differences in educational outcomes. Buchmann, Diprete and Mc Daniel (2008) reported that boys have greater development problems than girls. In line with this observation, Mutter (2003) also noted that boys have higher rates of antisocial behaviour, attention disorders, reading disabilities and others. He went further in explaining that, the lower rate of antisocial behaviour of girls in early childhood persist into the pre-school and elementary years, where they exhibit less disruptive conduct than do boys. These gender differences persist through high school.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Social maladjustment appears more frequently demonstrated among male and female youths probably because they are not given rationales for the social behaviour. Previous efforts and programmes for correcting these behaviour problems may be defective in inculcating expected social skills. The foundation of majority of these programmes may not be founded on best information provided through behavioural scientific investigation and research. While some programmes may be founded on the principles of science ignoring the fundamental truths by major world religious, philosophers, parents and others. Since science has discovered many principles related to learning and development that are not intuitively obvious, using only an alternative source such as religious scripture or philosophy and not using scientific method to develop educational programmes is difficult to justify. This provides the rationale for understanding the effective training skills for male and female, which may assist in suggesting various skills training and treatment to be developed and sustain the social behaviour of young people.

METHODOLOGY:

The 4 x 2 x 2 factorial quasi experimental, pretest, posts test, control group design was adopted in this study. The design is shown thus:

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Post test
Experimental	O1	X1	O2
Control	O3	-	O4
Experimental	O5	X2	O6
Control	O7	-	O8

Where O1, O3, O5, O7 are pretests; O2, O4, O6, O8 are post tests, X1, X2 are social skill training development, while – is no treatment.

SAMPLE:

The target population for the study was the maladjustment youths in Ekiti State public secondary schools. There were 170 public secondary schools at the period of the study. 60 senior secondary school students were selected through multi-stage sampling techniques from the three senatorial districts out of the existing 16 local government areas in the state. Two senatorial districts were randomly selected. Simple random sampling was used to select two local government areas. Simple random sampling was used to select one secondary school from each sampled local government area. Initially, a total of 600 youths were involved in the preliminary screening exercise through Maladjusted Behaviour Questionnaire. After scoring, the mean was determined. Any score that is less than mean minus 1 standard deviation is regarded as low maladjustment. Any one that is between mean plus 1 standard deviation is referred to as moderate maladjustment. Any score that is greater than mean plus 1 standard deviation is regarded as high maladjustment. Socially maladjusted mean scores are between ≤ 33.28 and ≥ 41.78 . Those who were socially maladjusted in each school were given social skills questionnaire (SSQ) as pre-test for further assistance to prime down the number and determine those who are to participate in the study. This enabled the researcher to select 30 subjects from each school through stratified random sampling technique to gather a sample across gender. The participants who were selected were randomly assigned to groups (experimental and control group).

1. Social Skill Training (SST)
2. Control Group

Each group belongs to a school to avoid interference. Research assistants were the school counsellors of each school with the assistance of a teacher. A day pre-treatment training based on the experiment was given to the research assistants in each of their schools. This lasted for a week. Four sessions were conducted over four weeks based on treatment packages.

TREATMENT STAGE:

The experimental groups were exposed to Social Skills Training (SST). The SST contains training in skills such as, self awareness, interpersonal, assertiveness, self control, stress tolerance, problem solving and flexibility. Members took part in the treatments with the aim that acquiring these skills will assist them in correcting the social maladjustment problems. Participants were given assignments, some exercises during the duration of the treatment. Assignments were given to evaluate their responses to training on each skill. Post test was given after the treatment.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The data obtained for the study were analyzed to know the effect of social skills training on the socially maladjusted behaviour of male and female youths. The Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) inferential analysis was employed for the analysis, while Multiple Classification Analysis was used to determine the effect of the treatment on each of the group.

The results of the data analysis for the study were presented according to the hypotheses that guided the study:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in social maladjusted behaviour of boys exposed to social skills training and boys not exposed.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the social maladjusted behaviour of girls exposed to social skills training and girls not exposed

Table 1: ANCOVA showing social behaviour of male subjects exposed to social skills training and those in control group.

Source	SS	Df	MS	F-cal	F-table
Corrected model	1933.468	2	966.734	9.371	3.35
Intercept	3042.272	1	3042.272	29.491	4.21
Covariate (Pretest)	24.062	1	24.062	.233	4.21
Group	1844.863	1	1844.863	17.883	4.21
Error	2785.332	27	103.160		
Corrected Total	4718.800	29			
Total	241282.000	30			

$p < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that F-Cal (17.883) is greater than F-table (4.21) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the social behaviour of boys exposed to social skills training will significantly differ from those not exposed. This result further indicates that the treatment has influence on the group with F-cal (29.491) greater than F-table (4.21).

Multiple classification Analysis was also used to know which of the groups exposed to social skills and those not exposed was more affected by the treatment.

Table 2: Multiple Classification Analysis on social behaviour of male youths exposed to social skills training and those in control group.

Grand Mean = 79.03					
Variable Category ⁺	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Eta	Adjusted for Independent Covariate ⁺	Beta
Social	30	18.89		17.37	.114
Control	30	-14.44		-13.80	
Multiple R ²					.013
Multiple R					.114

The table above reveals that male youths exposed to social skills training with grand mean of 79.03 had higher adjusted post test mean score of 96.40 (79.03+17.37) while those in the control group obtained an adjusted post test mean score of 65.23 (79.03+(13.80)). This implies that social skills training enhanced social behaviour of male youths than those that had no such training. The joint contribution of all the dependent variables (social and control) to the dependent variable (social behaviour) was 1.3%. The coefficient of how the various independent variables relate to dependent variable is .114 (11.4%).

Table 3: ANCOVA showing social behaviour of female youths exposed to social skills training and those in the control group.

Source	SS	Df	MMS	F-cal	F-table
Corrected model	8470.463	2	4232.232	24.071	3.35
Intercept	1408.436	1	1408.436	8.005	4.21
Covariate (pre-test)	284.537	1	284.537	1.617	4.21
Group	8297.93	1	8297.931	47.162	4.21
Error	4750.503	27	175.945		
Corrected Total	13220.967	29			
Total	200609.000	30			

$p < 0.05$

The above table reveals that F-cal (47.162) is greater than F-table (4.21). The null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that, there is significant difference between the social behaviour of female subjects exposed to social skills training and those in the control group. At the same time, the effectiveness of the treatment between pretest and post test does not show any significant difference with F-cal (1.617) less than F-table (4.21). Nevertheless, the result shows that there was a significant interaction between the group and the treatment with F-cal (8.005) greater than F-table (4.21).

Multiple Classification Analysis was employed to determine which of the groups exposed to social skills training and those not exposed was more affected by the treatment.

Table 4: Multiple Classification Analysis of social behaviour of female subjects exposed to social skills training and those in the control group.

Grand Mean = 86.20					
Variable ⁺ Category	N	Unadjusted Deviation	Eta	Adjusted for Independent ⁺ Covariate	Beta
Social	30	15.23		23.70	.643
Control	30	-19.90		-8.80	
Multiple R ³					.414
Multiple R					.643

The above table shows that female subjects exposed to social skills training had higher adjusted post-test mean of 109.90 (86.20 + 23.70), while those in the control group obtained an adjusted post-test mean score of 77.4 (86.20 + (-8.80)). It implies that social skill training produces better social behaviour in female youths than control group. The independent variables (social and control) jointly contributed 41.4% to the dependent variable (social behaviour).

DISCUSSION:

The result of the study indicates that social skills training was found to be effective in treating the social maladjusted behaviour of female youths than males. The production of female educational advantage may appear to begin at the very start of the school career, when girls and boys enter the school systems with average differences in social skills that are larger. Bennett, David, Farrington and Rowell (2005) offered explanation to this result, that gender differences in the development of social skill training may help to explain gender differences in violence and socially maladjusted behaviour. According to them one of the reasons females have lower rates of socially offences is because they have better pro social skills. The social skills of females are influenced by many factors including better inter-hemispheric communication, fewer frontal to be deficits, greater verbal ability and differential socialization by parents and peers. Diprete and Jenning (2011) also provide evidential support to the result of this

study, that female youth students have better social and behavioural skills at older ages than boys, and that gender differences in social and behavioural skills may be an important component of gender differences in academic performance. This sex difference may indicate that boys and girls behave socially differently and maladjusted differently for various reasons. How an individual ultimately responds to a stressful life event or risk factors depends on how that event is perceived, which in turn depends on individual's cognitive processes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Social skills training prove effective in treating the socially maladjusted behaviour of female youths than male youths. The treatment is also efficacious in the treatment of male socially maladjusted youths than those male youths not exposed to treatment at all. It is being recommended that some specific socially maladjusted behaviour of the male youths should be identified. The social skill training should be supported with other behavioural programme to help treat the socially maladjusted behaviour of youths. Social skills training programme should be consistently used for the female youths to help sustain the success already recorded in their training.

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