

**COUNSELLING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY COUNSELLORS IN HANDLING
STUDENTS' UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL IN
ANAMBRA STATE**

EGENTI UJU P. (PhD)

**Department of Educational Foundations
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,
Igbariam Campus**

E-mail: favouruju4real@yahoo.com

up.egenti@coou.edu.ng

+2348037860587

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine counselling strategies adopted by counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours among students in secondary schools in Anambra State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 251 counsellors in the public secondary schools in the State. The whole population was studied. A 24- item self-structured questionnaire titled "Counselling Strategies for Handling Undesirable Behaviours Questionnaire (CSHUBQ) was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling, Department from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to determine the reliability of the instrument by administering copies to 30 counsellors from Delta State of Nigeria. After analyzing the responses, a co-efficient of 'r'-0.78 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. Instrument was administered to the respondents through the help of research assistants, out of the 251 copies distributed, 250 were retrieved and used for the study. Simple descriptive statistics that involved mean scores and standard deviations were used in analyzing the data for the research question. In answering the research question, 2.50 and above were regarded as agree while mean scores less than 2.50 were regarded as disagree. The major findings of the study indicated that the strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours in secondary schools include reinforcement, modelling, shaping, punishment, time-out, proximity control, hiding, ear-shooting, extinction among others. It was among others recommended that teachers should be role models in order to be able to handle students' undesirable behaviours.

Keywords: counseling strategies, Counselors, Undesirable behaviours and Secondary schools.

Introduction

The most effective counseling strategy that counselors develop when attempting to manage challenging behaviour is to prevent it occurring in the first place. To this end, many school counsellors have developed strategies to promote positive behaviour. This is based on the assumption that all behaviour (negative and positive) is learned and, therefore, that

acceptable behaviour can be learned. It is also predicated on the belief that behaviour is contextual, so children can be taught to behave in a certain way in the school context. Acceptable behaviour is then reinforced in a school and classroom climate which is supportive of positive behaviour.

Mainstream schools are becoming increasingly inclusive and, therefore, regularly encounter a situation where they meet children with challenging behaviour. A positive strategy to the promotion of good behaviour benefits all children. However, strategies must be modified to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate to the children's educational needs. Support teachers (teacher counsellors) for instance, who are available in schools where students exhibit disruptive behaviour, can play a significant role in guiding children towards positive behaviour. Where behaviour is as a result of domestic factors, a home school community liaison teacher can often explore interventions within the home which can be of benefit.

Every school is obliged to have a code of behaviour. Promoting positive behaviour in the schools has an inherent need for a safe and secure environment. The classroom, for instances, can be the only stable element in the life of a student not experiencing such security in other parts of his/ her life. Counsellors model positive behaviour, by treating the students with respect and building up a positive relationship with them. The discourse so far indicate that every human individual has the potential for self-growth, self—development and self—actualization.

In the society, people always turn to their relations, friends and other adults for help whenever they experience personal problems. Such problems could be educational, social, emotional, vocational and psychological. Traditionally, people seek to solve these problems through pieces of advice from parents, relatives, religious leaders, village heads, societal leaders, teachers, native doctors, school heads, and seers (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). In the modern society, majority of people turn to counselling in taking care of their problems.

Counselling is a process whereby a counsellor helps one to understand himself/herself and the causes of his/her problems. The one being helped is referred to as client. The client is helped to make good life out of a confusing state of life. Counselling as a purposeful, private conversation arising from the intention of one person to reflect on and resolve a problem in living and the willingness of another person to assist in that endeavor needs varying methods to accomplish (McLeod, 2011).

In the context of this study the researcher defined counselling as a professional process of assisting people in solving their myriad of problems and to also help them change their bad behaviours/habits in order to live a satisfied and meaningful life in the society. It is in the light of the above that counselling units are established in secondary schools.

The achievement of the objectives of secondary education and the objectives for setting up schools is dependent, among other things, on students' behaviour. There is the belief among experts that there is a link between behaviour and learning and as such behaviour should not be considered in isolation from teaching and learning (Grigg, 2010). Desirable behaviours provide the best conditions under which the dynamics of learning and teaching precede. An individual needs desirable behaviour in order to be happy and a well adjusted

person. It helps the students to direct their energies into appropriate channels and to behave in a socially desirable and objective manner.

Students with positive behaviours achieve more academically than those with undesirable behaviours. On the other hand, undesirable behaviours have the tendency to impede learning rather than promote it. The issue of undesirable behaviours among students today is a cause of concern among parents, teachers, and governments and even among students themselves.

Undesirable behaviour as seen by Ndua-Ozo (2005) is any behaviour pattern that fails to meet with the norms of the environment. Onu (2015) also defined undesirable behaviours as those unwanted behaviours that hamper teaching and learning activities lies in the classroom and hinder progress in community and the society at large. Other terms used to refer to undesirable behaviors include: abnormal behaviour, misbehaviour, inappropriate behaviour, disruptive behaviour, among others.

Njoku (2004) pointed out that undesirable behaviour at the moment is a canker worm that has eaten deep into fabrics of the entire educational system and Anambra state in particular. According to Njoku, undesirable behaviours among secondary school students in Anambra manifest in different guises but the type that seems more prevalent and of great concern is undesirable behaviour among students. Undesirable behaviour among students in the school has negative implications for success in educational programme. In affirmation, Nwankwo (2004) opined that students undesirable behaviour have become increasingly the greatest occupational hazard of teaching profession in recent time.

Some of these behaviours are truancy, cheating in examinations, and lateness to school, bullying, stealing, and fighting, amongst others (Admin, 2000). Other scholars identified undesirable behaviour of children in the form of aggression. This is a behaviour disorder shown in a child expressing his fears and anxiety towards his peers and teachers in the classroom. He/she is very hostile and tries to take laws into his/her hand (Iwuama, 2003; Njoku, 2004). The consequences of student's undesirable behaviours are numerous. Some of such consequences include reduction in instructional time and students learning. The distractions from undesirable behaviours of students can affect the efficiency and productivity of the class where a teacher is unable to maintain effective class control. He/she may become frustrated and so handles the subject matter anyhow with the result that a good number of school children would not gain fully from the lessons. This therefore calls for strategies the counsellors can adopt in handling the undesirable behaviours among secondary school students.

Strategy is the means by which individuals or organizations achieve their objectives. It is focused on achieving certain goals and the critical actions which make it up involve allocation of resources. Strategy implies consistency, integration or cohesiveness (Mintzberg, 2004). Strategy is the pattern of objectives, purposes, or goals and the major policies and plans for achieving these goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company or organization it is or is to be in and the kind of company or organization it is or is to be (Andrews, 2011). Chandler (2002) defined strategy as the determination of the long—run goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. The researcher defines strategy as a way of giving direction and purpose, deploying resources in the most effective manner and to coordinate the decisions made by different individuals. Authors

(Iwuama, 2003; Njoku, 2004) have discussed strategies for handling students' undesirable behaviours. Some of the strategies according to Njoku (2004) are listed thus: show students that it pays to behave; never punish an entire class; build content-related anticipation; change the tone; find things to appreciate; ramp up your enthusiasm; use your words; don't pander; forgive; give students choices; publicly announce classroom management goals; establish routines and state the truth when things go wrong. The persistence of students' undesirable behaviours in the area of the study therefore made the researcher investigate the counselling strategies adopted by counsellors in handling the undesirable behaviours among secondary school students in Anambra state.

Research Question

What are the strategies adopted by counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours among students in secondary schools in Anambra state?

Research Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 251 (two hundred and fifty-one) counsellors in the public secondary schools in the State. The whole population was studied. Thus, there was no need for sampling since the population size is not large enough to warrant sampling. A 24-item self-structured questionnaire titled "Counselling Strategies for Handling Undesirable Behaviours Questionnaire (CSHUBQ) was used to collect data. The questionnaire was divided into sections. Section "A" sought information on bio-data while section 'B' contained the items of the questionnaire. A four-point model scale of: Strongly Agree (SA=4); Agree (A=3); Disagree (D=2); and Strongly Disagree (SD=1) was employed for the instrument. The instrument was validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling, Department from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to determine the reliability of the instrument by administering copies to 30 counsellors from Delta State of Nigeria. After analyzing the responses, a co-efficient of 'r'-0.78 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. Instrument was administered to the respondents through the help of research assistants, out of the 251 copies distributed, 250 were retrieved and used for the study. Simple descriptive statistics that involved mean scores and standard deviations were used in analyzing the data for the research question. In answering the research question, 2.50 and above were regarded as agree while mean scores less than 2.50 were regarded as disagree.

Data Analysis

Research Question: What are the strategies adopted by counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours among students in secondary schools in Anambra state?

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Strategies Adopted by Counsellors in Handling Undesirable Behaviours

		X	SD	Remark
1.	Reinforcement	3.62	.68	Agree
2.	Modelling	3.69	.56	Agree
3.	Assertive training	3.55	.65	Agree
4.	Punishment	3.30	.81	Agree
5.	Extinction	3.31	.77	Agree
6.	Bio-feedback	3.34	.74	Agree
7.	Reward	3.34	.94	Agree
8.	Stimulus Generalization	3.16	.97	Agree
9.	Contingency Control	3.07	.96	Agree
10.	Fading	3.13	.80	Agree
11.	Shaping	3.10	.76	Agree
12.	Chaining	3.03	.93	Agree
13.	Token Economic	3.37	.76	Agree
14.	Control Therapy	3.13	.79	Agree
15.	Stimulus Control	3.10	.84	Agree
16.	Systematic Desensitization	3.09	.81	Agree
17.	Flooding	2.75	.89	Agree
18.	Prompting	2.98	.86	Agree
19.	Counter Conditioning	3.25	.90	Agree
20.	Impulsive Therapy	3.42	.79	Agree
21.	Time out	3.43	.79	Agree
22.	Ear shooting	3.31	.87	Agree
23.	Behaviour contracting	3.13	.80	Agree
24.	Proximity control	3.00	.83	Agree
25.	Over correction	2.94	1.03	Agree

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the respondents agree that the 25 listed strategies are adopted by counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours among secondary school students.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study indicated that the strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours in secondary schools include reinforcement, modelling, shaping, punishment, time-out, proximity control, hiding, ear-shooting, extinction among others.

Discussion of the Findings

The study found that strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours of secondary school students in Anambra State are reinforcement, modelling, assertive training, punishment, extinction, bio-feedback , reward, stimulus generalization, contingency control, fading, shaping, chaining, token economies, control therapy, stimulus

control, systematic desensitization, flooding, prompting, counter conditioning, impulsive therapy, time out, ear shooting, behavioural contracting, proximity control and over correction. As shown in table 1, all the respondents agree that the 25 listed strategies are adopted by counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours among secondary school students and their mean scores were above 2.50 which indicated agreement. The study conforms to the works of Parham (2002) who listed behavioural contraction, proximity control, over correction, flooding, stimulus control flooding among others as counselling strategies which the guidance counsellors used to progressively solve their clients' problems. The findings of Parham (2002) and the present study are the same because the twenty five listed counselling strategies are the standard strategies that are adopted universally by counsellors in handling students' undesirable behaviours in schools.

Conclusion

The major findings of the study indicated the strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in handling undesirable behaviours in secondary schools. The major ones include reinforcement, modelling, shaping, punishment, time-out, proximity control, hiding, ear-shooting, extinction among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should encourage teachers to adopt appropriate counselling strategies in handling students with undesirable behaviours in the schools.
2. The teachers should be role models in order to be able to handle students' undesirable behaviours.

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