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Cognitive Restructuring and Problem-Solving Therapies On Academic Self-Efficacy of In-School Adolescents from Father-Absent Families in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Adolescence is a stage of human development in which the father's involvement is critical. Father-absence had been linked to several psychological and social adjustment challenges among the adolescent, and these might impact on their academic self-efficacy. Most studies focus on factors affecting academic self-efficacy of adolescents with little intervention strategies and less concentration on adolescents from father-absent families. This study, therefore, investigated the effects of cognitive restructuring and problemsolving therapies on the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A pretest, post-test, control group, experimental design with a 3x3x3 factorial matrix was adopted. Three secondary schools were selected randomly from the three senatorial districts, which constitute Ekiti State. A total of 166 participants were randomly distributed into two experimental groups and a control group using simple random sampling technique. Participants in the а experimental groups 2 and 3 were exposed to ten (10) weeks of and Cognitive training on Problem Solving Therapy (PST)

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Restructuring (CR), respectively. In contrast, the control group was exposed to talk on communication skills. Two instruments, Fatherabsent Involvement Scale and Academic Self-Efficacy Scale, were validated with the reliability of Cronbach alpha of 0.92 and 0.84 respectively, were used for the study. The data for the three groups, Cognitive Restructuring Therapy, Problem-Solving Therapy, and the Control group, were analyzed using the Scheffe Post-hoc analysis to determine the direction of differences for significant results. There was a significant main effect of treatment on academic self-efficacy $(F_{2,140}=11.574, n^2=.143)$ of in-school adolescents from father-absent families. CR (\bar{x} =128.16) was more effective than PST (\bar{x} =113.49) and the control group (\bar{x} =91.82) in enhancing academic self-efficacy. In essence, the result showed that the two therapies were effective in improving academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families. However, cognitive restructuring6 was more effective than problem-solving therapy in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents. Based on the findings, it was recommended, that the tools of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving treatment could be utilized to enhance the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents.

Keywords: father-absent, self-efficacy, cognitive restructuring therapy, problem-solving therapy, in-school adolescent,



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Introduction

At present, an upsurge in the rate of household with father-absent and husbands has been observed. This might possibly be as a result of the communal and political advancements. These have taken place in recent years, due to education, urbanization, employment, non-marital childbearing, teenage pregnancies, and the binuclear family practices in Nigeria. However, the collapse of the primary family, along with an escalation in the number of families controlled by women is also, trending globally. The trend is also observed locally. Meanwhile, the United Nations has reported that there has been an alteration from extended families to nuclear families, as well as an increase in single-person households (Eastwood, 2001). This arrangement of the family unit can negatively impact the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Adolescence is a phase of individual development where father influence is critical. Adolescents have been described as a set of individuals in search of who they are. This helps to achieve a form of personality and purpose in their lives. One of the challenges which they face, which is crucial in the formation of their identity, is living without a father or having no father-figure to look up to (Martin, Ryan & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). Researches revealed that early commencement of sexual-intercourse, and engaging in different sexual behaviors and practices among adolescents of both sexes are associated with being nurtured by a singleparent (Ellis, 2004; Kaufman, 2006). These might have arisen, possibly, from the trauma of paternal deprivation and the instability of nurturing from both parents. Also, researches (e.g., Biller & Solomon, 1996; Ancona, 1998; Aderanti & Hassan, 2011; Agbo, 2015) revealed that adolescents who are not privileged to live with their biological father or lack a fathersubstitute, are prone to the development of a variety of psychological and personal disturbances. These too, might impinge on their personality development and academic achievement.

Meanwhile, studies have emphasized the significance of fathers in adolescents' lives (Blankenhorn, 1995; Perry, Harmon & Leeper, 2012). Blankenhorn (1995) highlighted four ways by which children benefit from their father's participation. These include supplying a child with a father's physical support and presenting a child with a father's financial and material support. Also, it provides a child with cultural values and ensuring the day to day nurturing, love, and emotional support that a child needs from both parents (Blankenhorn, 1995). In essence, the father can have a significant impact on the development of the child, especially when they are affectionate and supportive. Researchers believe that a father contributes significantly and exceptionally to his household (Popenoe, 1995) and even influence significantly his children's physical activities (Neshteruck, Nezami, Nino-Taplas, Davison &Ward, 2017). Horn (2002), earlier claims that "fathers leave indelible marks in the lives of their children and family cannot be substituted or matched with any other alternative or substitute."

Several studies have established that adolescents, whose fathers are absent, suffered, often from poor academic self-efficacy (Eizirik & Bergmann, 2004; Whitney, Prewett, Wang, & Chen, 2017). Academic self-efficacy, as a concept, coined by Albert Bandura (1977a), refers to the level of confidence that a student feels concerning his or her ability to complete academic tasks or reach academic milestones successfully. Bong and Skaalvik (2003) noted that these beliefs specifically are directed towards academic domains. Educational self-efficacy beliefs are thus distinct from non-academic, social, emotional, or physical fields but are associated with general self-efficacy beliefs (Kozlowski & Silas, 2010). Therefore, adolescents in fatherabsent families may suffer from poor academic self-efficacy. Some studies have found that a

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father's academic support was positively related to adolescents' academic motivation to work hard in school, feel their grades were necessary, and to place a high value on education (Alfaro, Umana-Taylor, & Bamaca, 2006; Whitney, Prewett, Wang & Chen, 2018). Also, children of involved fathers are more likely to have higher levels of economic and educational achievement, career success, occupational competency, better educational outcomes, higher educational expectations, higher educational attainment, and psychological well-being (Amato, 1994; National Centre for Education Statistics, 1997; Snarey, 1993). Thus, there is a need to improve the academic self-efficacy of in-adolescents from father-absent families to enhance their academic performance. This is important because academic self-efficacy motivates a student's learning through the use of such self-regulatory processes as goalsetting, self-monitoring, self-evaluation and strategy use (Veresova & Foglova, 2018). Researchers have proven that students' beliefs about their abilities to perform academic tasks successfully (i.e., academic self-efficacy) would predict their actual achievement levels in school (Bandura; 1997; Valentine, Dubois, Cooper, 2004; Pajares, 2009; McIlroy, Poole, Ursavas, & Moriarty, 2015). This study would therefore, look at the effects of the psychological interventions of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving therapies on academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families in Ekiti State.

Cognitive restructuring, which was initially developed by Albert Ellis (1989), is a psychotherapeutic process of learning. It was designed to recognize and challenge irrational or maladaptive thoughts of a client. There are many procedures used in cognitive restructuring. Some of these involve identifying and labeling distorted thoughts, Socratic questioning, thought recording, and identifying cognitive errors. Cognitive restructuring also involves examining the evidence (i.e., pro-con analysis or cost-benefit analysis), understanding idiosyncratic meaning/semantic techniques, reattribution, guided imagery and listing rational alternatives (Huppert, 2009).

The purpose of cognitive restructuring is to widen one's conscious perspective and thus allow room for a change in perception. Conclusively, cognitive restructuring helps the client to consider any maladaptive patterns in their thinking-feeling-behaviour cycles. The client's goal is to rethink these patterns and consider more adaptive alternatives that will work better for him or her. Ultimately, the goal is to have the adolescents recognize that sometimes his thoughts lead to feelings and actions which are antisocial. By examining and changing his idea (belief), the emotions and actions were altered in a pro-social direction. The shifting in thinking, if successful, can help the adolescent to minimize chances of future misconduct (Baker & Scarth, 2002; Salman, Esere, Omotosho, Abdullahi, & Oniyangi, 2011; Okun, 2011). In effect, Cognitive Restructuring helps an individual to reform their thinking faculty in such a way that he would be more rational and focused.

It could be assumed that adolescents from father-absent families have habitual dysfunctional thoughts that are coherent with underlying assumptions and beliefs. These could be seen in their weak relationship with people (Eizirik & Bergmann, 2004; Brown, 2019), poor self-esteem (Alami, Khosravan, Moghadam, Pakravan & Hosseni, 2014) and poor academic performance (Fu, Bo, Xue, & Yuan, 2017). Thus, recognizing automatic dysfunctional thoughts and fundamental beliefs in this set of adolescents can allow for a more sensible response, thereby allowing for the restructuring of the thought process. Some researchers have established a relationship between academic self-efficacy and cognitive restructuring. According to Ekennia, Otta, and Ogbuokiri (2013), the principles of cognitive restructuring assumes that individuals are not passive observers in their environment. Rather they are active, goal-oriented, and capable of taking responsibility for their decisions,



actions and consequently excise control over their behaviors. In a study among high school students, Liza (2010) found that cognitive restructuring programs have a significant positive effect on the students' academic self-efficacy. She discovered that cognitive restructuring techniques can tangibly enhance academic self-efficacy. Also, the result of a study carried out by Hamdan, Puskar, and Bandak (2009) on the use of cognitive restructuring technique with students suffering from depressive symptoms and low-academic self-efficacy, showed that students had lower scores on perceived stress, and lower depressive symptoms. It further revealed less use of avoidance coping strategies, and more use of approach coping strategies after the intervention. These imply that cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) is a cognitive behavioral technique that focuses on changing a person's perceptions and irrational assumptions of self and world. Cognitive restructuring gives people new ways of thinking and talking to themselves about their problems. This technique believes that man's maladaptive behavior was hinged on his irrational thoughts, beliefs, self-talk, or verbalizations.

The second psychological strategy adopted by the researchers is Problem-Solving Therapy (PST). Problem-solving therapy is a cognitive-behavioral intervention that focuses on training in adaptive problem-solving attitudes and skills (Davidson & Stenberg, 2003). The goal of this positive method is to apply the clinical intervention to alleviate and prevent psychopathology and improve positive well-being of individuals by helping them to cope more effectively with stressful problems in living. Problem-solving therapy, according to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2019), refers to a psychological treatment that helps to teach a person to efficiently manage the adverse effects of stressful events that can occur in life. Negative stress can also result from the addition of multiple "minor" occurrences, such as ongoing family difficulties, not performing well in school, financial setbacks, frequently dealing with traffic jams or stressed relationships with co-workers or a boss. When a stressful problem such as outlined above occurs, it either creates psychological setbacks or worsens the existing medical problem. Problem-solving therapy may be of help, either as a sole mediation or in combination with other methods. Problem-solving therapy can also help people who have more complicated problems, such as looking for meaning in one's life. Problem-solving skills, according to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), are vital component of academic success, particularly in mathematics, but more generally in all STEM fields (NCTM, 2000). According to Kay (2010), problemsolving is one of the focus areas of 21st-century learning that can play a pivotal role in academic self-efficacy. Zimmerman, and Campillo (2003) found out that personal knowledge and skill does not produce high-quality problem solving technique because, they lack the selfassurance to use their personal resources. Besides, more self-efficacious people display more energy and perseverance (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000).

Bandura (1995) found that students with a better sense of academic self-efficacy will achieve better academic performance. Lack of problem-solving skills among students has been a significant concern in science education. Britner and Pajares (2006) have demonstrated that problem-solving technique is a strong predictor of their academic selfefficacy. More research shows that high self-efficacy is associated with a variety of factors. These include, greater self-regulation, including more efficient use of problem-solving strategies and management of working time. Also, expending more significant effort, and persisting longer to complete a task, particularly in the face of obstacles and adversity are associated with high self-efficacy (Britner & Pajares, 2006; Pajares, 2005; Zimmerman, 2000). Also, students with high academic self-efficacy tend to use problem-solving strategies to



generate successful performance outcomes (Braten, Samuelstuen, & Stromso, 2004; Kitsantas, 2000; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

The presence of a father or father-figure is vital to in-school adolescents to function well academically and in society. However, adolescents from father-absent families experience low academic self-efficacy; thus, leading to academic and social maladjustment. Children solely raised by mothers without a father-figure may become delinquents and suffer from maladaptive behavior if not properly managed. Previous studies on academic selfefficacy among adolescents mostly focused more on stressor agents and adolescents from intact families with little emphasis on adolescents from father-absent families and therapeutic interventions to enhance their poor academic self-efficacy. This study, therefore, was designed to determine the effects of Cognitive Restructuring (CR) and Problem-Solving (PS) therapies on Academic Self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The broad direction of the research is to investigate the effects of Cognitive Restructuring and Problem-Solving Therapies on the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families in Ekiti State.

Research Hypothesis

For this study, a hypothesis was raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance. There will be no significant main effect of treatment on academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families.

Methodology

This study adopted a pre-test, post-test, control group experimental design. The study population comprised of all in-school adolescents (87,594) in all the 16 local government areas of Ekiti State (Ministry of Education, Ekiti State, 2016).

This research adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to select a senior secondary school each from the three senatorial districts in Ekiti, namely; Ekiti-north, Ekiti-south, and Ekiti-central. At the first stage, one local government was randomly selected from each of the senatorial districts. The next stage was the random selection of a senior secondary school from each of the chosen local governments. The participants were male and female in-school adolescents in Senior Secondary School who had a score of 70 and above in the Father-absent Involvement Scale. The total number of 166 participants was used for this study.

Inclusion Criteria

The study enrolled 166 participants with the following criteria:

• Participants were adolescents in public senior secondary schools in the selected local government areas.

- Participants were between the age range of 12 and 21 years.
- Participants were both male and female.
- Participants have scored above 70 in the Father-absent Involvement Scale.
- It included those who accepted to be video-recorded or photographed during the therapy sessions or agreed to participate behind the camera.

Instruments

This study was conducted using quantitative data generation instruments. The following tools were used for the study;

- The Father-absent Involvement Scale
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• Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

The Father-Absent Involvement Scale

The Father-absent Involvement Scale was used160 to screen participants in this study. It consisted of twenty-seven (27) items with four scale response formats ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. The items are both negatively and positively worded. Being a scale that measures father-absent, which is a negative construct, negatively worded items were scored strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). The responses were summed up together. Those that scored above 70 are the ones whose fathers are not involved in their affairs; hence they were selected for this study. The reliability of Cronbach alpha of .92 was obtained after administering the instruments in a pilot study to a selected sample of fifty (50) students in the Osun State, Nigeria. Hence, the Father-absent Involvement Scale was used in selecting participants in the study. Some of this scale include 'I have never seen my father physically; my father doesn't pay my school fees.'

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale

Items for this scale were drawn from Bandura's "Self-Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning" subscale (2001; 2006) and Owen and Froman's (1988) College Academic Self- Efficacy Scale (CASES) to create a 40- item Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) used for this study. Bandura's "Self- Efficacy for Self- Regulated Learning" subscale is an 11- item Likert scale taken from his "Children's Self-Efficacy Scale" (unpublished). The alpha coefficient (Rule & Griesemer, 1996) for this subscale is .81. The CASES has an alpha internal consistency estimate of .90 and .92. The CASES also shows strong incremental validity. The instrument (ASES) was, however, re-validated, and Cronbach alpha value of .84 was obtained after administering the tools in a pilot study to a selected sample of fifty (50) students in the Osun State, Nigeria

Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers visited and obtained permission from the respective school authority and subsequently explained the purpose and benefit of the study to both the school authorities and the participant. Having received their consent, the researchers then screened the respondents with the Father-absent Involvement Scale. Those that scored above 70 were used for the study. The researchers held an average of forty (40) minutes per training session on cognitive restructuring and problem-solving techniques for the two experimental groups, respectively, for 10 weeks while the participants in the control group were given a talk on communication. However, the same pre-test and post-test instruments (Academic Self-Efficacy Scale) were administered for the three groups. After each training session, the participants were given a snack as a way of incentive.

Control Group

The control group in this study was composed mainly of subjects screened as the other subjects in the experimental treatment conditions. However, subjects in the control group were interacted with only three therapeutic points, namely, in sessions one, seventh and tenth. They received pre- and post-treatment assessment as the treatment groups. They were informed immediately after the pre-treatment assessment that their training program would commence at the seventh session. The significant difference between the control group and the experimental groups was that no treatment is administered to the participants in the control group. They were given only educational counseling on communication, and not introduced to any specific treatment session. This group needs to assess non-specific therapeutic factors accruing from the environment and other spontaneous effects of the therapist-client expectation and assessment procedure.

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Method of Data Analysis

The data for the three groups (Cognitive Restructuring Therapy, Problem-Solving Therapy, and the Control group) was analyzed using the Scheffe Post-hoc analysis to determine the direction of differences for significant results.

RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Sex							
Sex	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent				
Male	76	45.8	45.8				
Female	90	54.2	100.0				
Total	166	100.0					

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Fig 1: Analysis of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Early (Below 14	12	7.23	7.2	
Years)				
Middle (14-16	134	80.72	88.0	
Years)				
Late (17-21 Years)	20	12.05	100.0	
Total	166	100.0		

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Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Age

Table 3: Scheffe Post-hoc Pairwise Analysis showing the significant differences among
various Treatment Groups and the Control Group in Academic self-efficacy

Experiment/Control	Ν	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Control Problem Solving Therapy Cognitive Restructuring Therapy	50 59 57	91.8200	113.4915	128.1579
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

From the above, the result revealed that experimental group 3 (Cognitive restructuring therapy) (\overline{x} = 128.16) has the highest mean than the experimental group 2 (Problem-solving therapy) (\overline{x} = 113.49) and control group 1 (\overline{x} = 91.82). By implication, cognitive restructuring therapy is more potent in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of the students than problem-solving therapy. The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R² = .347) overall indicates that the differences that exist in the group account for 34.7% in the variation of students' academic self-efficacy.

Discussion

There is no significant main effect of treatment on academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families

The hypothesis is rejected because the result of the statistical analysis conducted and presented in the Table 3 above revealed that there was a significant main effect of treatments on academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents from father-absent families. The implication of this is that cognitive restructuring and problem-solving therapy were effective



in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents. Although both treatments were active, the estimated marginal mean shown in the Table 3 further indicated that the group treated with cognitive restructuring was more effective in enhancing academic selfefficacy than those treated with problem-solving therapy. This finding could be a result of the nature of the cognitive restructuring package. This finding substantiated the study of Liza (2010), who reported that among high school students, cognitive restructuring programs have a significant positive effect on the students' academic self-efficacy. She found that cognitive restructuring techniques can tangibly enhance academic self-efficacy. The implication is that cognitive restructuring technique (CRT) is a cognitive behavioral technique that focuses on changing a person's perceptions and irrational assumptions of self and world. Cognitive restructuring gives people a new way of thinking and talking to themselves about their problems. This technique believes that man's maladaptive behavior is based on various factors. Some of these are irrational thoughts, beliefs, self-talk, or verbalizations. Ekennia, Otta, and Ogbuokiri (2013) also established that principles of cognitive restructuring assume that individuals are not passive observers in their environment. Rather they are active, goaloriented, and capable of taking responsibility for their decisions, actions and consequently excise control over their behaviors.

The findings also support with the study of Chen, Lu, Chang, Chu, and Chou (2006) who established the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique on depression and self-efficacy of adolescents with a control group. This study also corroborates that of Hamdan, Puskar and Bandak (2009) which showed that students have lower scores on perceived stress, lower depressive symptoms, less use of avoidance coping strategies and more use of approach coping strategies after the intervention.

This finding also validates that of Clark (2010), who stated that in most cognitive restructuring programs, subjects improve their social skills and academic self-efficacy. Branham (2009) established that cognitive restructuring and medication significantly improved the self-esteem and sense of academic self-efficacy of participants, as compared with those participants receiving only medicines. Liza (2010) reported that cognitive restructuring has a significant positive effect on the students' academic self-efficacy. She found that cognitive restructuring can tangibly increase academic self-efficacy.

This study also discovered that problem-solving therapy is effective in enhancing academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents. This finding validates the findings of Kay (2010), who established that problem solving is one of the focus areas of 21st-century learning, and academic self-efficacy plays a pivotal role. Zimmerman and Campillo (2003) reported that specific knowledge and skill does not produce high-quality problem solving skills if people lack the self-assurance to use the personal resources. Also, more self-efficacious people display more energy and perseverance (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000).

Conclusion from Findings

This study focused on enhancing academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents through the effect of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving therapy in Ekiti State and found out that the two treatments were effective in improving the academic self-efficacy of inschool adolescents from father-absent families. However, cognitive restructuring was more effective than problem-solving therapy in enhancing the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents.

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Implications of the findings

The result of this study implies that the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents can be enhanced irrespective of whether fathers are absent or not, with the application of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving therapies. Thus, in cases and or instances where secondary in-school adolescents are academically underperforming and are facing similar educational conditions of underachievement, the applied psychotherapies can have their benefits harnessed to mediate the learners' capacities for academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the result, the following are recommend:

• To enhance the academic self-efficacy of in-school adolescents, the tools of cognitive restructuring and problem-solving therapy can be utilized as their effectiveness has been proven in this study.

• Counseling units of various secondary schools should utilize these interventions in helping students with low academic self-efficacy.

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11 International Journal of Academic Research in Business, Arts and Science (IJARBAS.COM)

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 14
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