



EFFECT OF SELF MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE IN REDUCING STEALING TENDENCY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

Prof. G.C. Unachukwu¹, Nwosu Adaobi Anastesia²

¹Professor, Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Anambra State, Nigeria.

²PhD Research Scholar, Department of Guidance and Counselling, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Anambra State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique in reducing stealing tendency among secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. One research question guided the study while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05alpha levels of significance. A pre-test, post-test non-randomized control group quasi-experimental design was adopted and used for this study. A sample of 108 students with stealing tendency was selected from a population of 201 students. A purposive sampling technique was used in choosing two schools in the area of the study. All the two groups were pre-tested and post-tested using stealing tendency Questionnaire (STQ) designed by the researcher and validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. Data was collected for the study through direct delivery approach. Data collected were analyzed using Mean for answering hypothesis and ANCOVA in testing the hypothesis. Results obtained from the study indicated that Covert positive reinforcement technique is effective in reducing students' stealing tendency in secondary school students technique was effective in reducing stealing tendency among secondary school students. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended among others that teachers should refer students identified with stealing tendency to the school guidance counsellors for proper diagnosis of the problem and counselling using the covert positive reinforcement technique.

KEYWORDS: covert positive reinforcement technique, stealing tendency, school students, Anambra state

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, students in secondary could be seen as the future generations and leaders because they possess the required human and intellectual resources needed for the continuity of the entire nation. However, in Anambra State, today, habitual stealing in children and youth has become a major social problem which has the tendency to lead to other unlawful behaviour being manifested among students today in Anambra State. Today many of the school, especially those of secondary schools have records of reported stealing within the classrooms and school environment, which have negatively affected the educational, spiritual, economic, physical, psychological and social adaption of the students. Some severe forms of these behaviors many a time tend to indicate a more serious psychological problem.

Stealing among secondary school students has long been a source of concern in Nigerian school systems, particularly in secondary schools. Ekpo and

Ajake (2013), for example, claimed that there are significant rates of secondary school complaints about stealing inclination and theft, which must have been influenced by the child's upbringing. However, the term "tendency" refers to a person's propensity of engaging in a specific behaviour or action (Anyamene, Nwokolo & Maduegbuna, 2015). Kendal (2012) defines tendency as a strong chance that something will happen in a particular way. In the light of the above definitions stealing tendency means a high possibility, disposition or likelihood that a person or student would take someone's or fellow students' property without his or her consent. It is a characteristic manifestation, traits and attitudes and moves towards stealing.

Stealing tendency increases the possibility of envious thoughts, feelings and psychological disorders to intend to take people's belongings without their consent. Secondary school students' stealing tendency is aroused by a lot of risk factors like – antisocial, peer groups and poor parenting



practices, Grant and Cavello (2011). Poor parenting was observed as one of the strongest predictors of students' antisocial behaviour. Most secondary school students intend to steal for a number of bad reasons. Children especially the adolescents, who have not developed sufficient impulse control intend to steal in order to achieve their heart's desires as to belong, when they cannot obtain desired goals from honest means. The adolescents may intend to steal to boast their ego, to boast their feelings, to maintain parental approval, to show unresolved anger or revenge and other reasons. They may have done all these things intentionally or unintentionally, but the truth remains that these students have the tendency to steal. These students, who intend to steal, often express distorted feelings of anxiety or anger, rage or depression resulting from disappointment in their life's expectations.

Stealing among secondary school students is a very serious maladjusted behaviour that needs serious attention. Often, parents and teachers tend to use punitive measures like canning, kneeling down, suspension and other punitive measures to correct students who stole others things in schools, homes and elsewhere. Such measures however does not seem to have yielded any positive results. Today, despite all the punishment mated to these students who engage themselves in stealing behaviour, most of them have not quitted the stealing and many still show signs of stealing tendency.

Although studies have been conducted to understand factors that contribute to the adolescents' tendency to engage in stealing, not much has been done empirically to ascertain the efficacy of psychological techniques in the reduction of stealing tendency among secondary school students. Obalowo (2004) investigated the effect of cognitive restructuring and contingency management in the treatment of stealing tendency amongst some Nigeria adolescents. Such studies proved that behaviour disorders like stealing tendency is a problem that could be modified using psychological techniques,

Based on this, the issues of secondary school students' stealing tendency have remained a source of upset, shock, worry and disturbance to school guidance counsellors, researchers, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the society. It is against this background that the researcher was motivated to investigate the value of both the self-instruction and covert positive reinforcement techniques on stealing tendency among secondary school students in the study area which were effective. Current interventions for the treatment of stealing tendency include behavioural family modification therapies which aim at minimizing the secondary school students' behaviour by restructuring the family environment that changes the adolescents stealing tendency (Sanders, 2008). This

form of intervention has been observed to record low results, and produced less important changes in both parents and students follow-up treatment.

According to Lounge (2014), there are several degrees of psychological and behavioural modification treatments that have extremely beneficial outcomes on kids that engage in maladaptive behaviour such as stealing. Going by its efficiency in altering other maladaptive behaviour, covert positive reinforcement might be one such efficient approach in dealing with stealing inclination. According to Rafferty (2010), the self-instruction approach is an intervention treatment that entails teaching a student how to utilize self-positive statements to guide his own behaviour or activities in order to become a self-independent, self-adjusted, and self-sufficient human.

Furthermore, another proven approach that significantly reduced stealing inclination among secondary school pupils is covert positive reinforcement. Covert positive reinforcement techniques are a type of behaviour modification treatment that is used to treat psychiatric problems, including the desire to steal. It is a strategy for changing maladjusted behaviour that represents the appraisal of distorted behaviour and acknowledges intimate experiences.

Statement of the Problem

Stealing among students has long been an unpleasant, surprising, and distressing problem in Nigeria's educational system, notably in Anambra State. Given the overwhelming negative consequences for offenders, parents, fellow students, guidance counsellors, teachers, and society at large, there is a clear option for all: students stealing in all forms have destructive, dehumanizing, and dysfunctional effects on the lives of offenders, other students, and others. When such those with stealing tendency are not discovered and modified, it may lead to additional crimes, particularly violence, which may result in the end of their lives or life in prison.

Furthermore, several current alarming issues affecting Nigeria today, such as the economic crisis, unemployment saga, abject poverty, hunger, and other challenges, may encourage Nigerian teenagers to steal. The inability of some parents, teachers, school guidance counsellors, and the government to meet the demands of today's youths has forced today's youths and secondary school students to confront unresolved problems, decisions, and conditions over which students, their parents, teachers, and the government have little or no control, making growing up today vastly different from that of ancient times. However, the failure of parents, teachers, guidance counsellors, and the government to reach an agreement with children leaves them angry, distrustful, and unhappy, and they



may develop a thieving propensity, causing difficulties for themselves, parents, school authorities, and society at large.

Currently, as a result of the aforementioned obstacles to secondary school students, there is a greater severity and possibility of pupils stealing, which has resulted in significant disorder, anarchy, disillusionment, and retrogression in the country as a whole. All of this led the researcher to believe that non-punitive methods, such as psychological behavioural strategies such as self-instruction and covert positive reinforcement techniques, were needed to reduce secondary school pupils' stealing inclination in Anambra State, which proved beneficial.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to determine the effect of covert positive reinforcement techniques on stealing tendency among secondary school students in Anambra State. Specifically, the study intends to determine:

- 1) the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique, on stealing tendency among secondary school students in Anambra State when compared with those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study would be beneficial to the students who have stealing tendency, Guidance Counsellors, teachers and parents. The reason is that students who have stealing tendency would likely benefit from the technique in modifying their intended urge or likelihood to steal. This counselling technique would help the school guidance counsellors, to control and reduce the harrowing experiences they normally have in trying to control students likelihood and urge from taking fellow student's belongings without their consent. The results of this study would also serve as a base for further researches in the area under study and other places.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

- 1) What was the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency among secondary school student, when compared with those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 levels of significance.

- 1) There was no significant difference in the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency among secondary school student when compared with those in the control group treated with conventional counselling using their post-test mean scores.

3. METHODOLOGY

These are the procedures that were employed in carrying out the study. The study adopted quasi-experimental research design of pre-test and post-test non-randomized control group. This is non-randomized pretest-posttest control group design comprising of an experimental (treated with covert positive reinforcement technique) and control group (treated with conventional counselling).

This study was conducted in Awka South Local Government Area (LGA) in Anambra State of Nigeria. Awka South Local Government Area is one of the LGA in the state capital city of Awka.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

The samples for the study comprised 73 students. These comprised samples of both the junior and senior secondary school students with stealing tendency. The sample was chosen from a population of 201 students identified with stealing tendency in secondary schools in Awka South LGA. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting two schools that has the highest number of students with stealing tendency. Students from these selected school made up the sample size.

5. INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

The instrument that was used to identify students with stealing tendency is referred to as "Stealing tendency Questionnaire (STQ)". The instrument was developed by the researcher and validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument is composed of 20 items measuring individual's stealing tendency as it relates to peers interaction, home and school and the students' acceptance or non-acceptance of the stealing. The instrument has an internal consistency reliability coefficient of $r=0.72$. Stealing Tendency Questionnaire (STQ) was administered to the students in the two sampled groups of secondary schools by the researcher with the help of four trained research assistants. Data was collected before treatment and after treatment.

6. EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT PROCEDURE

The researcher obtained permission from the principals of the schools where the study was



conducted. The experimental therapy was carried out in the schools' counselling centres on the specified treatment days, with the permission of the school principals. Each of the schools that were chosen constituted a treatment group. The therapy regimens lasted eight weeks in a row.

7. STATISTICAL DESIGN

The completed instruments were scored following the scoring instructions provided in the STQ manual. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science. Research questions were answered using mean while hypotheses were tested

using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

8. RESULTS

Data from the field of study are shown in the table as follows:

Research Question

What was the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency of secondary school students when compared with those treated with conventional counselling using their pretest and posttest scores?

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest mean scores on stealing tendency of students treated with covert positive reinforcement and those treated with conventional counselling

Source of Variation	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Lost Mean	Remark
Covert positive reinforcement Tech.	24	56.92	34.04	22.88	Effective
Control	21	55.05	51.67	3.38	

Table 1 indicated that the students treated with covert positive reinforcement technique had pretest mean score of 56.92 and posttest mean score of 34.04 with lost mean 22.88 in their stealing tendency scores, while those in the control group who were trained with conventional counselling had pretest mean score of 55.05 and posttest mean score of 51.67 with lost mean 3.38. With posttest mean of 34.04 which is below 40.00 covert positive reinforcement technique

is effective in reducing students' stealing tendency in secondary school students.

Testing the Null Hypothesis

The effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency of secondary school students is not significant when compared with those treated with conventional counselling using their posttest mean scores.

Table 2: ANCOVA on the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency of secondary school students compared with those treated with conventional counselling using their posttest mean scores

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Pvalue	P ≤ 0.05
Corrected Model	3543.734	2	1771.867			
Intercept	155.162	1	155.162			
Pretest	64.559	1	64.559			
TreatmentModel	3512.632	1	3512.632	189.86	0.000	S
Error	777.066	42	18.502			
Total	84712.000	45				
Corrected Total	4320.800	44				

Table 2 shows that at 0.05 level of significance, 1df numerator and 44df denominator, the calculated F is 189.86 with P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the first null hypothesis is rejected. So, the effect of covert positive reinforcement technique on stealing tendency of secondary school students is significant.

9. DISCUSSION

The results of the study were hereby discussed:

Effects of Covert Positive Reinforcement on Students' Stealing Tendency

Covert positive reinforcement was also found to be effective on stealing tendency among secondary

school students. In the hypothesis, it was observed that there was a significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental group and the post-test mean scores of the control group. The experimental group post-test means scores was grossly reduced, more than the control group post-test mean scores. This means therefore, that the treatment had an effective impact on students' stealing tendency. These findings are similar to the findings of Grant and Carello (2011), Grant & Kim (2011) whose studies noted that when desirable behaviors are followed with immediate tangible rewards, and they become more frequent. It was therefore, observed that, the covert positive reinforcement technique was also effective on



stealing tendency among secondary school students in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

This finding is important because the seriousness of stealing in secondary schools today has become evidently unwholesome. In most cases teachers use punitive measures like the corporal punishment, manual labour, to check and control stealing tendency, which severally proved ineffective. According to Akinmoyewa (2007), punitive measures had often proved less effective. However, since covert positive reinforcement had proved effective empirically, their usages are therefore encouraged.

10. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of this study, the researcher concludes that a covert positive reinforcement technique was significantly effective in modifying students' stealing tendency in secondary schools in Awka South LGA.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that:

1. Teachers should refer those caught stealing and those that shows some inclination to steal to the school guidance counsellors for proper diagnosis of the problems, dialogue and immediate counselling before it goes out of hand, since it was observed and proved that these students always put to actions the urge to take peoples' things without permission because of their ignorance of the underlying detrimental consequences of stealing.
2. Guidance Counsellors working in schools should adopt the use of covert positive reinforcement technique in modifying students' tendency to steal.

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