

Effect of Social Skills Training Counselling on Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Secondary school students are at their adolescent stage, during this stage many adolescents are face with problem of anxiety, therefore there is the need for proper counseling program to which would improve their ability to recognize, understand and manage their emotions. The study assessed the effect of Social Skills Training Counselling Technique on academic anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to find out the level of academic anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State, effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State and difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic anxiety between boys and girls Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. Based on these objectives one correspondent research question and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Quasi experimental design in form of pretest posttest only design was employed in the study. The population of this study comprised both male and female SS II students in senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. Out of 145 SS II students identified with higher academic anxiety (60) SSII students were proportionally selected from the target population to form the sample size. The data collection instruments used for pretest and posttest in the study was an adopted instrument "Academic Anxiety Inventory". Validity and reliability of the instrument was obtained and the reliability index of 0.68 was established. The t-test for related sample and for independent sample were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found out, the level of Academic Anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State is high with 50%, there is significant effect of Social Skills Training (SST) counselling technique on Academic Anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State and there is no significant difference in the effect of SST counselling technique on Academic Anxiety between Boys and Girls senior secondary school students exposed to SST Counselling technique in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. It is recommended that since there is no significant difference in the effect of social skills training counseling technique on academic anxiety between boys and girls senior secondary school students in Kano state therefore the same treatment package of social skills Training counseling technique should be applying for both boys and girls students to reduce higher level of academic anxiety

Keywords: Academic Anxiety Social Skills Training Counselling Technique.

INTRODUCTION

Academic anxiety is the feelings of worry, tension, or dread that are associated with academic settings or tasks. This could be examinations, assignments, subjects as mathematics, reading, or science, social

pressures related to schoolwork from parents, peers, or merely feeling uneasy about studying or working in groups in class (Patel, 2016). High test anxiety is considered as one of the main factor for low performance among students. Anxiety was significantly and negatively correlated with grades obtained by the students and female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than do males due to culture and gender role in the society. Hancock (2001) revealed that students with high anxiety level performed poorly and were less motivated to learn. Singh & Thukral (2009) reported an inverse relationship between academic achievement and academic anxiety. Singh (2009) found a significant negative correlation between academic achievement and academic anxiety. Rezazadeh & Tavakoli (2009) found a statistically significant negative correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement and also revealed that female students have a higher level of test anxiety in contrast to male students. Vitasari, Wahab, Othman, Herawan, & Sinnadurai (2010) found a significant correlation of high level anxiety and low academic performance. These show test anxiety has negative effect on students' academic performance and it was negligibly negatively correlated with academic achievement and there was no significant difference between the academic anxiety of boys and girls.

Therefore, academic anxiety cannot be ignored at any cost, if we are concerned about students' performance. If it is not properly addressed it can have serious and long lasting consequences such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly in school work, and withdraw from socializing with peers or from other situations. However, the major problem in this research study is to find out the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic related anxiety employed by students at secondary schools of Kano State Nigeria.

The causes of academic anxieties arise from many different sources, and are specific to each person. However, most research indicates that the symptoms can be described in the categories of: physiological, cognitive, behavioral, and social (Kaur, Grewal & Saini, 2021).

In the study of Bakhshani, Tafreshi and Lotfinia (2022) on the effectiveness of Social Skills Training on Social Anxiety Disorder in Students with Learning Disabilities maintained that, children with learning disabilities (LDs) may be at risk of social anxiety because they are less socially accepted and more anxious than their peers. Approximately 70% of students with LDs experience a high level of anxiety symptoms, and they have clinical symptoms of anxiety more than their peers. The results of the ANCOVA test in the study of Bakhshani, Tafreshi and Lotfinia (2022) showed that social skills training reduced social anxiety in the intervention group ($P < 0.01$) this mean social skills training could reduce social anxiety in children with LDs and this can be a guideline for clinicians to provide the appropriate intervention for the emotional problems of students with LDs.

It is common for all learners to feel some degree of nervousness about academic requirements or assignments. In fact, a low degree of anxiousness can actually be helpful in creating motivation to meet academic goals. This is called facilitative anxiety. However, when these feelings of anxiety become so intense that they become detrimental to academic success, learners should engage in coping strategies to manage their academic anxiety. Kaur, Grewal and Saini (2021) study which correlates of academic anxiety among adolescents. Explained that, academic anxiety is uncomfortable or uneasiness feeling of students in academic institution towards academic tasks like exam preparation, presentations, assignments, interviews, curriculums, teaching methodologies, relationship with peers. From the literature review findings demonstrated that external factors like home and school environment and internal factors as academic achievement, academic motivation and study habits provoked as the key correlates of academic anxiety among adolescents.

Social skills training (SST) is a therapeutic approach, a form of behavior therapy used by teachers, therapists, and trainers to help individuals who have difficulties relating to other people. The training includes interventions and instructional methods that help individuals improve and comprehend social

behavior. The goal of social skills training is to help individuals understand the nonverbal and verbal behaviors involved in typical social interactions.

Social Skills Training Techniques Assessments can include self-reports, reports from others in the person's life, the therapist's observations, and role play. The therapist will likely ask what skills the individual feels could be improved or where they notice challenges in their social interactions. Social skills training (SST) is a type of behavior therapy used to improve social skills in people with mental disorders or developmental disabilities. SST may be used by teachers, therapists, or other professionals to help those with anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, and other diagnoses (Arlin, 2020). It is delivered either individually or in a group format, usually once or twice a week, and is often used as one component of a combined treatment program (Arlin, 2020).

SST counselling technique generally begins with an assessment of your specific skill deficits and impairments. Your therapist may ask you which social interactions you find the most challenging or which skills you feel could be improved. The goal of this process is to identify the best targets for social skills training for your particular situation. Once specific target areas are identified, techniques for improving social skills are introduced. Usually, changes are made in one area at a time to ensure you don't get overwhelmed. A therapist may describe a particular skill, explain how to carry it out, and model the behavior. Complex behaviors like how to carry on a conversation may be broken down into smaller pieces such as introducing one-self, making small talk, and leaving a conversation. Therapists will also discuss both verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Arlin, 2020).

SST addresses a wide range of social skills. While there are many different ways to define social skills, in general, SST focuses on the rules and behaviors that help individuals interact with one another. Some examples of skills targeted in SST programs include: Initiating conversations, greetings, appropriate eye contact, social interaction, how to behave in specific social and community settings, understanding emotions and facial expressions, gestures and body language, assertiveness and empathy. SST programs vary significantly based on the age and skill level of participants.

When using SST counseling several techniques are use like, **behavioral rehearsal, Corrective feedback, instruction, positive reinforcement, and weekly homework assignments.**

Research on the use of SST in treating Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) shows that it is effective whether executed alone or with another form of treatment (Bellack and Hersen, 2013). SST has also been shown to increase the results of group CBT for SAD. In general, SST is most effective when used as part of a comprehensive treatment program involving multiple components. Therefore, if students have severe academic anxiety, social skills training may be helpful for them both for their social skills and anxiety about social and academic situations. (Bellack and Hersen, 2013).

Spence (2003) explained 'Social Skills Training usually begins with an assessment of the specific skill deficits'. Trainers and therapists may ask their clients which social situations they find most challenging or which skills they feel could be improved. The purpose of this process is to determine which target groups are the most suitable for social skills training in the given situation. A set of techniques for improving social skills is introduced once specific target areas have been identified. Changes are usually made in one area at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed (Spence, 2003).

The goal of social skills training is to break complex social behaviors down into smaller pieces. Following that, these smaller parts are arranged in order of difficulty, and gradually introduced to the trainee. An individual working with a trainee who is learning to be more comfortable at parties, for example, might make a list of specific behaviors that belong to the complex behavior of "acting appropriately at parties," such as introducing himself or herself to others, conversing with several guests rather than just one, keeping

the conversation pleasant and interesting, thanking the host or hostess before leaving, and so on. Thus, the trainee would work on a specific behavior at a time instead of trying to acquire them all at once (Lancia, 2021).

Adeyinka, Makinde and Olusakin (2020) study on the effects of Acceptance-Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Social Skills Training (SST) on anxiety of adolescent students from father-absent families. The study revealed that Acceptance-Commitment Therapy and Social Skills Training significantly reduced anxiety among adolescents from father-absent families. It was also revealed that gender did not have any significant impact on self-esteem of the participants in the experimental groups.

Social skills Training (SST) are the building blocks of social interaction. If individuals have academic anxiety, they probably missed out on developing some of these important social skills. However, they can always learn them through effective SST counselling sessions (Caballo, Carrillo & Ollendick, 2015). Caballo, Carrillo & Ollendick (2015) identified the following social skills learned through SST counselling sessions: **Being Assertive, Communicating Non-Verbally, Communicating Verbally, Making Introductions, Practicing Active Listening, Overcoming Telephone Phobia and Accepting and Giving Compliments.** Also, Social skills training techniques include instruction, modelling, role-playing, shaping, feedback, and reinforcing positive interactions.

Social skills are essential because they enable you to communicate more effectively and efficiently, which, in turn, helps you to build, maintain and grow relationships with family, friends, colleagues, teachers and even school norms and ethics. Having strong social skills increases your chances to communicate your needs and wants effectively, develop more relationships, easily handle and navigate tricky social situations and academic complexity.

Training in social skills enables trainees to learn to interpret these and other social signals, so that they may act appropriately in various situations in the company of other people. It is assumed that by improving social skills or changing selected behaviors, people can raise their self-esteem and increase their chances of gaining favorable attention and academically perform better.

The trainee practices selected behaviors in individual or group therapy sessions to change their social behavior patterns. Training in social skills also aims to improve an individual's ability to function socially in everyday situations. Training in social skills helps master specific skills — for example, improving one's social media utilizations, note taking attending classes lesson and participating in curricular and non-curricular school functioning and these will definitely reduce level of academic anxiety in students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To find out level of Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.
2. To find out effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.
3. To find out difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on Academic Anxiety between boys and girls Secondary School students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question was designed for the purpose of the study:

1. What is the level of Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano

State?

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.
2. There is no significant difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on Academic Anxiety between boys and girls Secondary School Students in Kano State.

METHODOLOGY

Quasi experimental design in form of pretest posttest control design was employed in the study. According to Kolo (2003), quasi experimental design involves the manipulation of one or more independent variables, but there is no random assignment of subjects to conditions. Therefore, this research assessed the effect of social skills training counselling technique on academic anxiety among secondary school students in Kano State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all SS II students in senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. Out of the total population one hundred and forty-five (145) Senior Secondary School Two (S.S.S. II) students were identified with higher academic anxiety. Out of 145 SS II students identified with higher academic performance sixty (60) SSII students were proportionally selected from the target population to participate in the treatment. Four schools were sampled 2 male and 2 female schools from the local government making four schools. Sixty SS II students were proportionally distributed across the schools. The use of 60 as sample size was guided based on the fact that sample size is determined to some extent by the style of the research (Cohen, Marion & Morrison 2011).

Purposive sampling technique was used in drawing up the sample for the study proportionately, because only students identified with defective higher academic anxiety using self-report questionnaires were used in the study. The instruments used to measure level of academic anxiety, pretest and posttest was 'Academic Anxiety Inventory'. The instrument has 2 sections A and B, the A section of the inventory contained demographic information such as name, gender, age, class and school. Section B contains 20 items on a 5 point likert scale with responses ranging from Never (0), Rarely (1), Sometimes (2), Frequently (3) and Always (4).

Content validity of the instruments was obtained by the researcher with the assistance of the Supervisor, experts in Education, Tests and Measurement and English, so as to have assurance on the quality, content and language use and all necessary corrections were made before final production of the two instruments. The reliability of the instrument used for this study was established using test re-test method. Twenty (20) SSS II students who did not participate in the actual study were sampled and conducted a pilot study for each instrument. The instrument was administered to them for the first time and second time within an interval of two weeks. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used in computing the correlation co-efficient of the instrument. The reliability index of 0.70 was established.

The study was conducted on three phases pretest phase, treatment phase and posttest phase. The treatment lasted for about 25-30 minutes' sessions and the sessions were done once in a week for the period of twelve (12) weeks using treatment package of "Social Skills Training Counselling Technique on Academic Anxiety":

The statistical tools to be used by the researcher to analyze and interpret the data was descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics in form of frequency and percentage was used to answer the research question, while t-test for related sample and for independent sample were used to test

the study hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. t-test was used because it is applicable statistical technique for determining the differences or otherwise between means of two samples or between two groups.

RESULT

The research question raised in section one were answered using descriptive statistics.

Research Question: What is the level of Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State?

Table 1: Level of Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State:

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Students with low Academic Anxiety	67	18.11%
2.	Students with moderate Academic Anxiety	118	31.89%
2.	Students with higher Academic Anxiety	185	50%
	Total:	370	100%

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 1 above presents the level of Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. It presents that, Students with low Academic Anxiety are 67 with (18.11), Students with moderate Academic Anxiety are 118 with (31.89%) while the students with Students with moderate Academic Anxiety are 185 with (50%). Therefore, the above analysis present that, the level of Academic Anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State is moderate with 50%.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Four null hypotheses were raised specifically to determine the effect of social skills training counselling technique on academic anxiety among secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. The hypotheses were tested and results were presented using 0.05 level of significant as follows:

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on Academic Anxiety among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.

Table 2: t-test for Related Sample Academic Anxiety Pretest and Posttest Mean Score:

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	P-value (2-tailed)
Pretest Mean Score	30	43.70	6.94	38.04	29	0.000
Posttest Mean Score	30	28.20	3.60	36.02		

p-value 0.000 > 0.05 = significant

Table 2 above shows t-test analysis for related sample for pre-test and post-test academic anxiety mean scores of senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State exposed to Social Skills Training (SST) counselling technique. It shows that the t-value of Pretest is 38.04 and that of Posttest is 36.02 with p-

value of (0.000) tested at 0.05 level of significance and 29 degree of freedom. The p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance and as such the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant effect of Social Skills Training (SST) counselling technique on academic anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State was rejected. Therefore, this reveals that, there is significant effect of Social Skills Training (SST) counselling technique on academic anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic anxiety between boys and girls Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.

Table 3: t-test for Difference in the Posttest Mean Score Academic Anxiety between Boys and Girls:

	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Df	P-value (2-tailed)
Posttest Boys	30	23.70	6.94	26.04	58	0.201
Posttest Girls	30	48.20	3.60			

P-value $0.000 > 0.05 = \text{significant}$

Table 3 above shows t-test analysis for difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic anxiety between boys and girls Senior Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. It shows that the t-value is 26.04 with p-value of (0.201) tested at 0.05 level of significance and 58 degree of freedom. The p-value of 0.201 is greater than 0.05 level of significance and as such the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant difference in the effect of Social Skills Training counselling technique on academic anxiety between boys and girls Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State is retained. Therefore, this reveals that, there is no significant difference in the effect of SST counselling technique on Academic Anxiety between Boys and Girls senior secondary school students exposed to SST Counselling technique in Kano Metropolis, Kano State.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to explore the effect of Social Skills Training Counselling Technique on Academic Anxiety among Senior Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State, Nigeria. Our first study revealed a significant proportion of students experiencing academic anxiety, with 18.11% classified as low, and 50% classified as moderate. These findings align with previous research indicating that academic anxiety is a pervasive issue among students. Caballo, Carrillo & Ollendic (2015).

No significant difference was found between academic anxiety of boys and girls secondary school students and this is in line with the finding of Rezazadeh & Tavakoli (2009) who found a statistical negative correlation between test anxiety and academic achievement. The last finding of the study revealed that, there is no significant difference in the effect of SST counselling technique on academic anxiety between Boys and Girls senior secondary school students exposed to SST Counselling technique in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. This finding is in line with the study of Adeyinka, Makinde and Olusakin (2020) on the effects of Acceptance-Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Social Skills Training (SST) on anxiety of adolescent students from father-absent families. The study revealed that gender did not have any significant impact on self-esteem of the participants in the experimental groups. Causes of success or failure can be external or internal, stable or unstable, and controllable or uncontrollable. Internal reasons are something that the student did. Someone or something else controls external reasons. Stable causes are expected to occur again,

and unstable causes are changeable. Controllable causes are something a student can change, but uncontrollable causes are believed to be unchangeable (Vockell, n.d.). Males tend to focus more on ability and other internal factors while females tend to focus on effort and external factors (McClure, Meyer, Garisch, Fischer, Weir, & Walkey, 2011).

Few studies indicated a significant difference in anxiety based on gender. The studies did not agree about who showed more anxiety (Grills-Traquechel et al, 2012; Robinson, 1966). Robinson (1966) found that male students were significantly more likely to suffer from anxiety. Grills-Traquechel et al (2012) found higher levels of anxiety in female students. One study found that more females were more likely to attribute their grades to the effort they put in to a test or assignment. The same study found that students to attribute academic performance to effort are more likely to suffer from anxiety. Therefore, females in the study were more likely to suffer from anxiety related to school work (McClure et al., 2011). Teachers can use this information to be more aware of signs of anxiety, especially in female students.

Mahajan (2015) explained academic anxiety of secondary school students in relation to their parental encouragement. It is quite clear from table 2 that the mean academic anxiety score of male secondary school students is 18.71 and S.D. is 2.88. The mean academic anxiety score of female secondary school students is 19.10 and S.D. is 3.15. The „t“ value is found to be 0.72 which is less than the corresponding table value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis- there exists no significant difference in academic anxiety of male and female secondary school students stands accepted. It may be attributed to the explanation that academic anxiety i.e. a feeling of worry nervousness or uneasy about academic activities is only a subjective trait and not influenced by personal characteristics like gender and age.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research finding and discussions the study concluded that, the level of academic anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State is moderate. It was also concluded that, Social Skills Training (SST) counselling technique is significantly affective in reducing high level of academic anxiety among senior secondary school students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State and there is no significant difference in the effect of SST counselling technique on academic anxiety between Boys and Girls senior secondary school students exposed to SST Counselling technique in Kano Metropolis, Kano State. Academic anxiety can have a negative effect on a student's academic performance. Teachers and parents can learn to recognize the signs of anxiety in students. If teachers and parents help students learn to control anxiety early on, more serious academic problems related to anxiety can be avoided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion the study recommends that:

1. Since Social Skills Training counselling technique is significantly effective in the reduction of academic anxiety among Secondary School Students, teachers and school counsellors should be formulating a standard structures social skills training to be used in the handling students identified with higher academic anxiety.
2. The structured treatment package of SST can serve as a guide for counsellors and teachers in handling academic anxiety and related cases of their client.

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