

Effect of Social Skill Training Techniques on Dating Anxiety among NCE III Students of Federal College of Education Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the effect of social skill training techniques on dating anxiety among NCE III students of Federal College of Education (FCE) Zaria. The population of the study consists of 2,210 NCE III regular students in School of Science in FCE Zaria. The study was guided by two research objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study employed quasi experimental design involving pretest and posttest. The sample of the study comprised of twenty (20) students identified with dating anxieties. The sample for the experiment was divided into two groups of ten for those having physiological dating anxieties and ten for those having psychological dating anxieties. The two groups were presented for pre-test and scores were recorded. Seven weeks' treatment sessions on social skill training was administered on the two groups. At the end of the treatments, each group was subjected to post-test. The null hypotheses were tested using paired sampled t-test. The findings of the study revealed that social skill training has significant effect on the physiological and psychological dating anxieties among unmarried students. The study therefore recommended that school counsellors and psychologists should adopt Social Skill Training in handling students with social anxiety problems.

Keywords: Social, Skill, Training, Physiological, Psychological, Dating, Anxieties

Introduction

Dating anxiety is conceptualized as worry, distress, and inhibition experienced during interactions with dating partners or members of the opposite sex; that is, potential dating partners. Specifically, 'dating anxiety' is characterized by intense fear in dating situations, causing distress and an impaired ability to function effectively. Hence, tertiary education students are at a stage which may be an intense time of emotional and social challenges in their life (Belz, 2018). Lenzenweger, Lane, Lorenge and Kessler (2007) conducted a research on the treatment of avoidant personality disorder by social skill in the clinic or real life and found that social skill training can be used to prevent avoidant personality disorder.

Dating anxiety ensues when either of the daters is worried about how to dress, how to style their hair, when to go on a date, the best location, what to talk about, what topics to avoid. Many studies have recorded the incidence of dating anxiety and that it is almost a common occurrence in higher institutions that students may develop physical and somatic symptoms, such as shaking, rapid breathing, muscular tension, sweating and fatigue (Stevens & Morris, 2007; Banyard & Cross, 2008). It can cause fidgety behaviour, an inability to concentrate or focus, as well as feelings of nervousness and impending panic or doom. According to Papa (2018), it might be accompanied by physical symptoms such as blushing, trembling, sweating, palpitations or stammering. Dating-anxious individuals often fear being evaluated in a negative manner by prospective partners, or being embarrassed by one's own action (Freeman & Freeman, 2013).

Dating, globally, involves two or more people who have already decided that they share romantic or sexual feelings towards each other. These people will have dates on a regular basis, and they may or may not be having sexual relations. This period is sometimes seen as a precursor to engagement. Some cultures require people to wait until a certain age to begin dating, which has been a source of controversy. Developing appropriate emotions and meeting social demands become very essential as dating refers to the process whereby two people (especially a man and a woman) participate in exploring each other to see whether they have marital compatibility; dating anxiety has become a growing concern to counsellors, students, mental health practitioners, adolescents, sociologists, researchers, and other stakeholders involved in youth education and general development (Odaci & Kalkan, 2010).

Many different factors may influence the process of dating among students and these factors could be deficit in social skills, such as failure to recognize and reflect social skills. For instance, when students are young and have not dated much, or older and have been out of circulation so long that they have forgotten how to date, then dating can be intimidating (Bolton, 2018). Many students lack the knowledge of appropriate behaviours for dating interactions, which may lead to distress or discomfort in dating situations. Also, disappointment in the past could ignite dating anxiety in a new dating situation among students (Neider & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). As adolescents get older (especially in Nigeria), they encounter increased pressure and expectation to date with a view to getting married or be involved in a romantic relationship to gain social status and fit with their peers. As a result of dating anxiety, social activities may help to make students socialize and improve their interpersonal interaction without necessarily becoming promiscuous (Bajesh, 2015).

Social skills training technique is seen as a fundamental factor for formation of relationships. These may include the building and maintenance of relationship, the

ability to handle the unreasonable behaviour of others and to be able to get along with others. Social skills technique can be used for the treatment of psychosocial problems (such as bullying, alcoholism, substance dependence, social anxiety, phobias, depression, and dating anxiety). Its usage as an adjunct to other techniques has a long history with an efficacious track record. Furthermore, it is effective at increasing clients' social skills and at reducing their psychiatric symptoms (Ayodele, 2011). This technique may be helpful in harmonizing or developing interpersonal relationship among individuals, it is a constructive process that involves assertiveness, communication and listening skills, modelling and management of feelings.

As stated by Dowd and Tierney (2017), using techniques such as modelling, rehearsal, corrective feedback and homework, SST focuses on enhancing patients' intrapersonal skills such as conversation initiation as well as performance related to skills such as presentations. Social skills are the tools that enable people to communicate, learn, ask for help, get needs met in appropriate ways, get along with others, make friends, develop healthy relationships, protect themselves, and in general, be able to interact with the society harmoniously. Jasper (2004) and Olson, Flygare, Gorling, Rade, Chen, Lindstedt and Bolte (2017) explained that SST is among the most researched behavioural interventions since it aims to provide the patient with a skill that can be applied when confronted with the feared situation, by teaching a patients skills required for effective social interactions. DeRosier (2010) reported that constant exposure to interactive social situation can help individual with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD). Therefore, social skills build essential character traits like trustworthiness, respectfulness, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These traits help build an internal moral compass, allowing individuals to make good choices in thinking and behaviour, resulting in social competence. According to Cuncic (2018) and Nowak (2018), social skills training is a type of behavioural technique used to improve social skills in people with mental disorders or developmental disabilities. Hence, SST may be used by counsellors, teachers, or other professionals to help those with anxiety disorders, mood disorders, personality disorders, dating anxiety and other diagnoses.

Statement of the Problem

Dating anxiety can be seen as one of the factors that can hinder higher institution student's social life. It should be an area of concern on how to reduce the problem of dating anxiety as it continues to thrive among students. According to Campbell, Bierman and Molenaar (2016), dating anxiety is characterized by excessive worrying thoughts and panic during dating. Sometimes, the dating anxious person may exhibit feeling of stress, self-doubt (that making a good impression may be a struggle), fears judgment, embarrassment, or public scrutiny, always expecting bad things to happen, negative feelings, expecting rejection, inability to concentrate or focus on what is

going well rather than what is going wrong; when the head is full of negative self-talk, sweating, fidgeting, the voice might quiver and talking becomes difficult. In educational settings, the dating anxiety related problems of students may act as barriers to optimal academic and/or social development (Lampen, 2018).

Unfortunately, young adolescents may be unaware of how to behave in a dating relationship, so they are vulnerable to inaccurate messages from their family of origin, peers and the media. Therefore, the amount of distress experienced by dating-anxious college students makes dating anxiety among college students worthy of treatment attention in its own right, but not just merging it with the problems of psychiatric patients. Dating anxiety can be so frustrating to students and parents. When left untreated, it can cause significant stress for students (Zaider, Heimberg & Lida, 2010).

Potential consequences of prolonged dating anxiety are severe. Low academic problem can lead to lack of concentration and depression on the part of students, which result to lack of academic progress, failure to develop satisfactory social relationships, inability to get married and significant family conflict to adult emotional disorders. If dating anxiety is not curtailed, it is capable of derailing students' future ambitions and interpersonal enhancement; it prevents academic achievement, prevents parents from realizing the aim of their kind and monetary effort, and prevents government from achieving its developmental goals.

Objectives of the Study

The study set out to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To determine the effect of social skill training technique (SST) on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria.
- 2) To determine the effect of social skill training technique (SST) on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria.

Research Questions

This study provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of social skills training technique (SST) on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria?
2. What is the effect of social skills training technique (SST) on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of social skill training technique (SST) on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria.

Ho2: There is no significant effect of social skill training technique (SST) on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria.

Methodology

The study adopted pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental research design. Quasi-experimental design involves administering a treatment, but in which participants are not randomly assigned to the treatment group (Trochim in Caridad, 2016). The rationale for the choice of this design is because it lacks full laboratory control and laboratory isolation, as it took place outside the laboratory setting. Quasi-experimental design is most often performed in natural settings where it is not practicable to conduct a true experimental research. According to Fisher and Crandell (2001), in such a design a single test group or area is selected and the dependent variable is measured before the introduction of the treatment. The treatment is then introduced and the dependent variable is measured again after the treatment has been introduced. The effect of the treatment would be equal to the level of the phenomenon after the treatment less the level of the phenomenon before the treatment.

The population of the study consists of 2,210 NCE III regular students of School of Science in FCE Zaria. Students who are single were surveyed. The choice of single students of FCE Zaria who are above 21 years old is based on the assumption that those students have attained the puberty and formal operational stage of physical and cognitive development. While the sample of the study has the total number of 20 students purposively selected from the school.

The instrument used for data collection was Dating Anxiety Scale-Student (DAS-S) adapted from the Dating Anxiety Scale –Adolescents (DAS-A) developed by Glickman and La Greca, (2004). Moderations were included in the area of biographic data, content and numbers of items and responses with a view to suit the area of the study. Section A contains the biographic information of the respondent. Section B indicates the involvements of the respondents into a relationship with the hope of getting married using the options A-D. Students who answer “a” and/or “b” were considered “usually not dating” and “c” and/or “d” were considered “usually dating”. Section “C” of the instrument consists twenty-six (26) items, unlike the Dating anxiety scale-adolescents that has 21 items. First 15 items are on psychological dating anxiety while items 16 to 26 are on physiological dating anxiety. The items of the instrument are scored as Not at all my character, Not my character, Fairly like my character, and Extremely my character on a four-point scale 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The scores of DAS-S range from 21 to 84. Respondents who score between 45 and 84 are being targeted as having dating anxiety. However, respondents with highest score are being targeted for the treatment.

The instrument was presented for validation to three Professors in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for criticism and technical inputs relating to the appropriateness of the items and clarity of the language. The inputs of these experts determined the final form of the instrument for the study. The adapted instrument was subjected to pilot study. 50 copies of the instruments were administered to 50 students in the study area but do not form part of the treatment group. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the data collected were analysed using Cronbach's alpha. The result of the pilot testing reveals that the instrument has internal consistency of .870.

The treatment procedure was conducted in three phases:

1. **Pre-test phase:** At this phase, dating anxiety scale-student was administered to the sample students in both the 2 groups before the commencement of the treatment.

2. **Treatment phase:** At this phase, Social Skills Technique was treated to both the groups. Each of the group training lasted for 7weeks, 40minutes per session and once in a week.

First Week: Orientation and Establishing Counselling Relation.

Second Week: Introduction: Discussion on the major objectives and goals of Social Skills Training counselling technique as a technique to be used in the treatment sessions.

Third Week: Interpersonal Skills such as strategies for conversations, dating and friendship.

Fourth Week: Subtle cues contained in social interactions; how to change topics of conversation and how to shift to another activity.

Fifth Session: Learning Social Sign such as responding, negotiation and risk-taking, practising selected behaviours.

Sixth Week: Improve social skills which are attending social gathering and intermingle with others.

Seventh Week: Improving social competencies and communication skills, nonverbal and assertive communication.

3. **Post test phase:** At this phase data was collected for the second time by re-administering the Dating Anxiety Scale-Student to the participants. The data was then compared with that of pre-test scores to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.

The data collected after administering the research instrument was collated, organized and analysed using both the descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts was used to present the demographic data. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions, while inferential statistics of sample paired t-test was used to test the null hypotheses formulated for this study.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant effect of social skill training technique (SST) on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria.

Table 1: Paired Sample t-test on Effect of SST on Physiological Dating Anxiety among NCE Students of FCE Zaria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	MD	df	t-cal	p
Pre-test		18.650	1.826				
	10			8.83	9	10.361	0.000
Post-test		9.820	0.878				

$P < 0.05$, t- computed > 1.96 at df 9

Results of the paired t-test in Table 1 revealed that the calculated p-value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that there was significant effect of SST on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of SST on physiological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria is hereby rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant effect of social skill training technique (SST) on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria .

Table 2: Paired Sample t-test on Effect of SST on Psychological Dating Anxiety among NCE Students of FCE Zaria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	MD	df	t-cal	p
Pre-test		20.20	0.919				
	10			8.70	9	16.015	0.000
Post-test		11.50	0.867				

$P < 0.05$, t- computed > 1.96 at df 9

Results of the paired t-test in Table 2 revealed that the calculated p-value of 0.001 is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that there was significant effect of Social Skills Training on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of SST on psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria is hereby rejected.

Discussion of the findings

The first and second hypotheses revealed that Social Skills Training was effective in reducing both physiological and psychological dating anxiety among NCE students of FCE Zaria. This finding is in line with the work of Lenzenweger, Lane, Lorenge and Kessler (2007) on the treatment of avoidant personality disorder by social skill in the clinic or real life setting. After the treatment session and three month follow-up, they concluded that social skills training appears to be a useful and promising intervention for avoidant personality disorder but its long term impact remains to be investigated.

Another investigation on the effectiveness of SST is that of Bolton (2018). The findings showed that SST in treating Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is effective whether used alone or in combination with another form of treatment. Kilmer in Dack (2016) reported one study which examined the usefulness of social skills training, found significant improvement in measures of avoidance and anxiety after SST treatment which consists of graduated hierarchy of behavioural modifications, modelling the therapist and role reversal, as well as feedback from the therapist and group. This study also found no significant difference in results between conducting this training within a clinical setting or in public within the opportunity for clients to interact with strangers. Also Cuncic (2018) and Nowak (2018) reported that Social Skills Training in combination with Cognitive Modification did not demonstrate significantly different result than Social Skills Training alone, nor were there significant differences between outcomes of those treated within a group versus individually. Another research on the effects of SST is that of DeRosier (2010) who reported that constant exposure to interactive social situation can help individual with Auditory Processing Disorder (APD). DeRosier further reported that another core symptom to APD is the reluctance to move outside daily routines. SST also exposes individual to a variety of new experiences and skills to function in social situation like eye contact conversation, dating, confrontations, topic of discussion etc.

Jasper (2004) and Olson, Flygare, Gorling, Rade, Chen, Lindstedt and Bolte (2017) explained that SST is among the most researched behavioural interventions since it aims to provide the patient with a skill that can be applied when confronted with the feared situation by teaching a patient skills required for effective social interactions. It is important to note that interpersonal problems play a role in the etiology and maintenance of psychiatric disorders. Therefore, by using techniques such as modelling, rehearsal, corrective feedback and homework, SST focuses on enhancing patients' intrapersonal skills such as conversation initiation as well as performance related skills such as formal presentations (Dowd & Tierney, 2017).

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that there is significant effect of social skill training on the physiological and psychological dating anxiety among N.C.E III students of Federal College of Education Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that social skill training, if positively utilized, can be used as a behaviour modification technique to minimize social anxiety particularly dating anxieties among college students.

Recommendations

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

5. Every College of Education (public or private) should have a counselling unit with professional counsellors and school psychologists that will help in handling students with social anxiety problems.
6. School counsellors and psychologists should be encouraged to use social skill programme to enhance interpersonal interaction and also to address social anxiety among College of Education Students.

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