

Effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapeutic Model on Self Efficacy of Jobless Youths

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Abstract

The study adopted quasi-experimental research design using a simple random sampling procedure to draw a sample size of forty (40) jobless youths within Gwagwalada Township in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. The instrument adopted for the study was a 10-item Self-Efficacy Scale. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha statistics which produced a reliability index of 0.81. REBT was administered as the treatment on the experimental group for three weeks, whereas the control group received no treatment. Self-efficacy scale was administered twice as pre-test and post-test. t-test statistics was used to analyse the data generated from the experimental and control groups. Findings revealed, among others, that there was significant difference in self efficacy, between the two groups, at post-test. Moreover, there was also a significant gender difference in self-efficacy at post-test. The study recommended, among others, that mental health counsellors should monitor obvious indicators of mental health issues in jobless and other vulnerable youths and take proactive measures to alleviate such. The authors also recommended a paradigm shift from knowledge-based education to skills-centred instruction to address unemployment crisis in the country.

Keywords: rational emotive behaviour therapy, self-efficacy, rehabilitation, gender, jobless youths

Introduction

Youth unemployment is the situation of young people who are looking for a job but cannot find one; the age range defined by the United Nations (UN) is 15-24 years old. An unemployed person is defined as someone who does not have a job but is actively seeking for one. In order to qualify as unemployed for official and statistical measurement, the individual must be without employment, willing and able to work, of the officially designated working age (often from the teens to the mid-60s) and actively searching for a position. Youth unemployment rates tend to be higher than the adult rates in every country in the world. Youth unemployment has largely been described as a major, if not the primary catalyst for revolution, political and societal upheaval and conflict towards the system and the state. It has historically been associated with upheaval and change or overthrow of political establishments and mass societal change such as the Arab spring, Russian Civil War and the French revolution, all largely caused

by large scale youth unemployment (Bay & Blekesaune, 2002; Rasmussen, 2010; Ansani & Daniele, 2012). There are about 1.2 billion youths in the world aged between 15 and 24 years, accounting for 17% of the world's population; 87% of this population live in developing countries. The age range defined by the United Nation (UN World Youth Report, 2012) addresses the period when mandatory schooling ends until the age of 24 (Martin, 2009). This definition remains controversial as it not only impacts unemployment statistics but also plays an important role in the targeted solutions designed by policymakers in the world.

Two main debates are ongoing at the global stage. First, defining the age range of youths is not as obvious as it seems; just as theoretical perspectives have dominated this debate. Youths cannot be seen as a stage in life between adolescence and adulthood (Gough et al., 2013) or as a socially constructed group with its own subculture, making it difficult to estimate a comparable age range between countries (Gough et al., 2013). Second, the definition of unemployment itself leads to the possibility of not accounting for a number of young people who are out of work. Those who do not have a job and are actively seeking work, often women whose joblessness may not be officially accounted for, due to religious and socio-cultural considerations. They are considered inactive and are therefore excluded in unemployment statistics. Their inclusion would substantially increase the unemployment rate (UNESCO, 2012). There are multiple and complex causes of youth unemployment. Among them, the quality and relevance of education, inflexible labour market and regulations, which in turn create a situation of assistance and dependency are some of them. The socio-economic condition of the country is another potent factor.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa in grappling with a significant challenge of youth unemployment. The term youth refers to individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years old and this segment of the population comprises a substantial portion of Nigeria's workforce. Unfortunately, many young Nigerians find themselves without gainful employment despite their energy and potential. According to recent statistics, the youth unemployment rate stands at an alarming rate of 34% (Ariyo, 2023). This figure not only highlights the magnitude of the problem, but also raises concerns about its long-term consequences for economic growth and social stability.

Nigeria's population is said to have reached approximately 239.7 million people in 2025 (United Nations, 2025). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) states that about half of the population is made up of youth defined as individuals between 15 and 34 years of age. Unfortunately, as the youth population grows, so does the unemployment rate. In fact, unemployed youths numbered about 4.3% of the total population by 2024 (NBS, 2024). First, in terms of age, younger youths struggle even more to find jobs. At least two-third of unemployed youths are between 15 and 24 years of age. And in terms of gender, available statistics shows that a majority of unemployed youths are females. Women accounted for 50% of unemployed youths between 2008 and 2012 (Akande, 2014).

Numerous factors contribute to this unfortunate situation. One major cause is the disparity between job opportunities and the growing number of young people entering the labour market. There is a high population growth rate of 3.5% per annum which accompanies an already large national population of over 167 million. Additionally, limited access to quality education and

skill development further exacerbates this crisis. The deficit school curriculum has contributed to the failure of educational institutions to provide students with the appropriate skills to make them employable. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded these challenges by causing widespread job losses across various sectors. Many businesses have downsized or closed down entirely due to economic destructions caused by lockdown and restrictions.

In addition to these supply factors, there is a lack of vibrant industries to absorb these school leavers. Another reason might be that policy makers have had to confront inadequate information on data that can form the basis for effective planning as reported in other studies (Asaju et al., 2014; Iwayemi, 2014). Employment data are very hard to obtain even from statutory institutions and agencies established for gathering socio-economic data. Where unemployment data exist at all, they are limited to urban areas and in fact, not all those seeking employment attempt to register. This lack of data makes it difficult for policymakers to understand the nature of unemployment challenge and make informed decisions on how to support young people in the labour market.

Addressing youth unemployment requires a comprehensive approach that focuses on creating more job opportunities while equipping young people with relevant skills needed in today's competitive job market. It calls for targeted government interventions that prioritize investment in education, vocational training programmes, entrepreneurship support initiatives as well as public private partnerships aimed at fostering economic growth.

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is a type of therapy introduced by Albert Ellis in 1950s; it is an approach that helps individuals to identify irrational beliefs and negative thought patterns that may lead to emotional or behavioural issues. Once these patterns are identified, a therapist will help the client to develop strategies to replace them with more rational patterns. REBT can be particularly helpful for people living with a variety of issues including depression, anxiety, addictive behaviours, phobias, overwhelming feelings of anger, guilt or rage, procrastination, disordered eating habits, aggression, sleep disorders. Ellis argued that people mistakenly blame external events for unhappiness. He stated however that it is the interpretation of these events that truly lies at the heart of people's psychological distress. To explain this process, Ellis developed what he referred to as the ABC model.

- Activating event: Something happens in the environment around you
- Beliefs: you hold a belief about the event or situation
- Consequence: you have an emotional response to your belief

In order to understand the impact of such events, it is also essential to look at the beliefs people hold about these experiences as well as a result of those beliefs. In order to better understand how REBT works, it is important to take a closer look at the therapeutic process itself. The very first step in the process is to identify the underlying irrational thoughts, feelings and beliefs that lead to psychological distress. In many cases, these irrational beliefs are reflected as "I must", "I should" or "I cannot". According to Ellis, some of the most common irrational beliefs include: feeling excessively upset over other peoples' mistakes or misconduct, believing that you must be 100% competent and successful in everything to be valued and worthwhile;

believing that you have no control over your own unhappiness, that your contentment and joy are dependent upon external forces.

Holding such beliefs makes it almost impossible to respond to activating situations in a psychologically healthy way. Possessing such rigid expectations of selves and others only leads to disappointment, regrets and anxiety. Once these underlying feelings have been identified, the next step is to challenge the mistaken beliefs. In order to do this, the therapist disputes these beliefs using very direct and even confrontational methods.

Ellis suggested that rather than simply being warm and supportive, therapists need to be blunt, honest and logical in order to push people towards challenging their thoughts and behaviours. REBT can be a daunting process for the client. Facing irrational thought patterns can be difficult especially because accepting these beliefs as unhealthy is far from easy. Once the client has identified the problematic beliefs, the process of actively changing these thoughts can be even more challenging. The goal of REBT is to help people respond rationally to such situations. When faced with this type of situation in the future, the emotionally healthy response would be to realize that it is not realistic to expect success in every endeavour. You made a mistake but that is okay. Everyone makes mistakes. All you can do is to learn from the situation and move on. While REBT uses cognitive strategies, it focuses on emotions and behaviours as well. In addition to identifying and disputing irrational beliefs, therapists and clients also work together to target the emotional responses that accompany problematic thoughts. Clients are encouraged to change unwanted behaviours using strategies such as meditation and guided imaginary.

REBT uses three main types of techniques which corresponds with the ABC in problem solving techniques. These strategies can help address the activating event (A). They often include working to develop problem solving skills, assertiveness, social skills, decision making skills and conflict resolution skills. Cognitive restructuring techniques help to change irrational beliefs (B). They might include logical or rationalizing techniques, guided imaginary and visualization, reframing or looking at events in a different way, humour and irony, exposure to a feared situation and disputing irrational thoughts. Coping techniques can help the client better manage the emotional consequences (C) or irrational thoughts. These coping techniques, may include relaxation, hypnosis and meditation. REBT can be effective in the treatment of a range of psychological disorders including anxiety, phobia, burnout and depression (Ogbonnaya et al., 2019; Junaedi et al., 2022). It can also help people manage specific behaviours such as severe shyness and excessive approval seeking.

Purpose of the study

The study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To determine differences in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with Rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.
- ii. To ascertain differences in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.
- iii. To determine gender differences in self-efficacy before treatment with rationale emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

iv. To ascertain gender difference in self-efficacy in the experimental group after treatment with rationale-emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotional counselling therapy.

Ho3: There is no significant gender difference in self-efficacy before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Ho4: There is no significant gender difference in self efficacy in the experimental groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Methodology

This study adopted quasi experimental research design. Forty (40) unemployed youths were randomly selected within Gwagwalada Township, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, as participants for the study. The forty participants were equally divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was treated with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy by Albert Ellis. Treatment period lasted for three weeks of two counselling sessions per week. The counselling therapist spent 30 - 45 minutes per session with unemployed youths in the experimental group. The six counselling sessions featured fundamental tenets of the counselling therapy. The counselling sessions focused on disabusing irrational mindset of clients, building their self-confidence, boosting their faith and hope in prevailing economic situation and enhancing their self-efficacy. The counsellor's role as advocated by the proponents of the therapeutic model was constantly followed in a lively interactive session. The control group on the other hand was alienated from the treatment procedure. No effort was made to boost the self-efficacy of the control group with regard to their jobless situation.

A pre-test and post-test procedure was administered on participants using general self-efficacy scale by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). The scale consisted of 10-items that evaluated client's self-efficacy as a necessary coping skill in the face of joblessness. The scale consisted of four response options - Not at all True (NT), Hardly True (HT), Moderately True (MT) and Exactly True (ET) with numerical figures assigned in ascending order of magnitude 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The range of a sum score is from 10 to 40 points. The internal consistency of the instrument is however from .76 to .90. The analysis of the post-test and pretest results was computed using t-test statistics.

Table 1: REBT treatment schedule

Week	Counselling Session	Counselling Items
1	First Session	Disabuse irrational ideas and attitudes of client to build self confidence in joblessness.
	Second session	Give client a new orientation on how to turn around misfortunes both past and present to his advantage, teach them how to rethink, challenge, contradict their internalized thoughts.
2	Third session	Confront counterproductive thoughts and actions regarding unemployment situation.
	Fourth session	Use of role models and available economic opportunities to client's advantage.
3	Fifth session	Using systematic desensitization techniques, operant conditioning and didactic teaching as well as assignment to rehabilitate client's self-efficacy.
	Sixth session	Using reinforcement skills, encouragement, persuasion and cajoling to motivate client to be proactive, self-dependent and productive.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Table 2: t-test on difference in self-efficacy between experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig (2- tailed)	(2- Decision tailed)
Experimental	20	3.37	0.32	-2.061	38	.054	Accepted
Control	20	3.64	0.26				

The analysis on Table 2 was carried out to establish whether there is significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy. With a significant value of .054 (more than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy is accepted. Experimental and control groups therefore, did not differ significantly in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rationale emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control group after treatment with rationale-emotional counselling therapy.

Table 3: t-test on difference in self-efficacy between experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy

Group	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision
Experimental	20	3.73	0.16	-7.302	38	.000	Rejected
Control	20	3.23	0.15				

The analysis on Table 3 was carried out to establish whether there is significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy. With a significant value of .000 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy was rejected. Experimental and control groups therefore, differ significantly in self-efficacy after treatment with rationale emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Ho3: There is no significant gender difference in self-efficacy before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Table 4: t-test on gender difference in self-efficacy before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision
Male	20	3.37	0.32	-2.061	38	.055	Accepted
Female	20	3.64	0.26				

The analysis on Table 3 was carried out to establish whether there is gender difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy. With a significant value of .055 (more than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy is accepted. Males and females therefore, did not differ significantly in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups before treatment with rationale emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Ho4: There is no significant gender difference in self-efficacy in the experimental group after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Table 5: t-test on gender difference in self-efficacy in the experimental group after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig (2-tailed)	(2- Decision tailed)
Male	10	3.23	0.16	-7.302	18	.000	Rejected
Female	10	3.73	0.15				

The analysis on Table 4 was carried out to establish whether there is gender difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy. With a significant value of .000 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy is rejected. Experimental and control groups therefore differ significantly in self-efficacy after treatment with rational emotive behaviour counselling therapy.

Discussion of findings

Hypothesis one sought to find out if there was any significant mean score difference between the experimental and control groups in self-efficacy before treatment with Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in the pre-test. Findings revealed that no significant difference in self-efficacy was found between the experimental and control groups before treatment with REBT. This implies that prior to REBT treatment, participants in both groups did not differ in their self-efficacy over their unemployment situation. Ellis (1959), believed that emotional disturbances or neurotic behaviour occurs as a result of illogical or irrational thinking. He believed that the counsellor on challenging the client's irrational thoughts should also expose him to the main irrational thoughts that human beings are prone to so that at the end of the therapy, he does not fall victim to another set of irrational beliefs and unrealistic expectations. This finding corroborated that of Junaedi et al. (2022) who discovered no difference in anxiety levels in the inmate group who did not receive REBT treatment.

Findings in Hypothesis two revealed that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) had significant effect on the experimental group in contrast to the non-intervention or control group in the post test. Similarly, Ogbonnaya et al. (2019) discovered significant drop in burn-out syndrome among undergraduate electronics work students in South East Nigeria. These studies (Ogbonnaya et al., 2019; Junaedi et al., 2022) therefore concluded that REBT counselling technique significantly decreases symptoms of burn-out syndrome among undergraduate electronics work students and decreases the inmate anxiety levels.

Conclusion

There was significant difference in self-efficacy between the experimental and control groups in the post-test with REBT just as significant gender difference in self-efficacy was also found in the post-test with females having higher mean score value in self-efficacy than their male counterpart.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with regard to the findings:

1. Mental health counsellors both within and outside the school setting should endeavour to monitor and observe obvious symptoms of emotional distress or depression among jobless and other vulnerable youths and seek ways of alleviating such emotional disturbances with a view to boost their self-efficacy.
2. Career counsellors should sensitize jobless youths with current occupational information to keep them abreast with occupational and entrepreneurial opportunities available in the community.
3. Educational institutions should brace up in terms of exposing undergraduates to entrepreneurial skills that can make them self-reliant as well as employers of labour other than job seekers. Employers of labour should de-emphasize paper qualification but rather place due priority on practical skills as suitable qualifications for employment.

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