

## ***Exploring the Interaction Effect of Parents Socioeconomic Status on Cognitive Analytic Therapy Outcome in the Management of Socially Maladjusted Behaviours among Senior Secondary School Students in Benin City***

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### **Abstract**

*This study explored the interaction effect of Parents' Socio-Economic Status (PSES) on the treatment outcome of Cognitive Analytic Therapy in the management of socially maladjusted behaviours among senior secondary school students in Benin City. It was guided by one research question and a corresponding hypothesis. The design for the study was a quasi-experimental research design using a pre-test and post-test approach. A sample of 67 senior secondary school II students participated in this study. The Social Maladjustment Scale (SMS) was adapted for data collection. The instrument had an internal consistency of 0.93 using the Cronbach's alpha method. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at a 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that there was no significant interaction effect of PSES on adolescents' social maladjustment mean scores, suggesting that CAT's effectiveness was consistent across socio-economic backgrounds. Based on the result, recommendations were made, including that CAT should be integrated into school counselling programmes and that counsellors' professional competence should be enhanced.*

**Keywords:** cognitive analytic therapy, socio-economic status, social maladjustment, adolescents, counselling intervention

### **Introduction**

Social maladjustment among adolescents is a multifaceted problem that has drawn significant attention in educational psychology and counselling research due to its impact on students' academic, social, and emotional well-being. Socially maladjusted students often exhibit persistent patterns of disruptive, aggressive, withdrawn, or oppositional behaviours that interfere with interpersonal relationships and school functioning (Adewale & Olatunji, 2021). In the Nigerian context, particularly in Benin City, these behaviours are compounded by socio-cultural and economic pressures that exacerbate adjustment difficulties among secondary school students. These behaviours could be managed to a bearable level through psychotherapeutic interventions such as cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness training, social skills training, conflict resolution therapy, cognitive analytic therapy, among others.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) has emerged as a promising integrative psychotherapy that combines cognitive and analytic techniques to help individuals recognise and modify

maladaptive relational patterns (Ryle & Kerr, 2020). CAT's focus on understanding the origins of dysfunctional behaviours and developing strategies to change them makes it relevant for managing adolescents' social maladjustment in school settings. This therapeutic approach has been found to promote self-awareness, emotional regulation, and improved interpersonal functioning among youths (Denman, 2021; Lopez & Reyes, 2023; Imafidon, 2022). However, the efficacy of CAT in managing social maladjustment cannot be examined in isolation from contextual factors such as parents' socio-economic status (PSES). The parents' socio-economic status (PSES) is typically measured by parents' income, education, and occupation, and could have a profound influence on adolescents' psychological development, access to resources, and responsiveness to interventions (Hallam et al., 2021). Similarly, Olsen et al. (2022) highlighted the efficacy of cognitive and analytic therapies in restructuring maladaptive relational patterns among adolescents from varying economic backgrounds. Adolescents from low-SES backgrounds often face limited access to mental health services, heightened exposure to environmental stressors, and constrained opportunities for skill development, which may affect the outcomes of psychological interventions, including Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT).

In Benin City, the location of this study, the socioeconomic inequalities are pronounced; the interaction between parents' socioeconomic status and the effectiveness of psychological interventions warrants empirical investigations. Students from high-socio-economic status families may benefit from greater parental involvement, access to learning materials, and emotional support, and potentially enhance the effectiveness of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in addressing maladjusted behaviours. Conversely, students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds may face barriers, including parental work overload, limited educational resources, and higher exposure to community stressors, which can hinder therapeutic gains (Eboh & Anyaegbunam, 2020; Abdullahi & Adebayo, 2024). Meanwhile, research has consistently shown that socio-economic status shapes the developmental environment of adolescents, influencing not only their behavioural patterns but also their responsiveness to intervention programmes (Bradley & Corwyn, 2021; Hawkins & Kim, 2021). In psychological therapy, higher socio-economic status often correlates with better treatment adherence, more supportive home environments, and greater reinforcement of learned skills outside therapy sessions. Nguyen and Park (2022) provided empirical evidence that standardized intervention settings can neutralize socio-economic disparities, ensuring equitable therapeutic experiences. Conversely, lower socio-economic status is associated with elevated stress, inconsistent parental monitoring, and inadequate reinforcement of positive behaviours, all of which can undermine the therapeutic process (Kraus et al., 2021).

The application of CAT in Nigerian secondary schools is relatively new, and studies investigating its interaction with the parents' socio-economic status (PSES) variables are scarce. Most existing research on Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) effectiveness has been conducted in foreign studies, where the cultural and socioeconomic conditions are perceived to differ significantly from those in sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria. This raises questions about the cultural adaptability of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in Nigerian educational settings and the extent to which parents' socio-economic status (PSES) could moderate its impact on adolescents' behaviour. From a theoretical standpoint, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underscores the interplay between individual,

family, and societal factors in shaping adolescent development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2020). The parents' socio-economic status (PSES) represents a critical microsystem factor that interacts with school-based interventions, such as Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT), to influence behavioural outcomes. Understanding this interaction can provide valuable insights into tailoring interventions to meet the needs of students from diverse economic backgrounds.

In addition to direct economic resources, the parents' socio-economic status (PSES) influences parenting styles, communication patterns, and the value placed on education, all of which could affect adolescents' openness to therapeutic engagement. From the researchers' view, parents with higher socio-economic backgrounds may be more inclined to support school-based interventions, provide a conducive home environment for practice, and engage with counsellors, thereby amplifying therapeutic benefits. While on the other hand, economic hardship may limit parents' involvement and create stressors that perpetuate maladjustment.

Social maladjustment is an intentional act among adolescents and often manifests in forms such as truancy, defiance, aggression, and withdrawal, which disrupt the learning environment and hinder peer relationships (Odeyemi et al., 2022). The principles of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) could address these unacceptable behaviours by helping students identify unhelpful relational patterns, understand their origins, and develop healthier coping mechanisms. The sustainability of these changes, however, may depend heavily on whether the adolescent's home environment reinforces the gains made during therapy sessions.

Several empirical studies have highlighted the moderating effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on behavioural interventions in schools. Kumuyi et al. (2021) found that psychosocial interventions were more effective among students from middle- and high socioeconomic status families compared to their low socioeconomic status counterparts, primarily due to differences in parental support and resource availability. This suggests that in Benin City, where economic disparities are stark, Cognitive Analytic Therapy's (CAT) effectiveness might vary significantly across socio-economic strata. It is also important to consider that families with low socio-economic status might possess resilience factors, such as strong community bonds and cultural coping strategies, that can complement any therapeutic objectives, such as those embedded in Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT). Afolabi and Okeke (2021) posited that when therapy integrates culturally relevant approaches and acknowledges socioeconomic realities, even students from disadvantaged backgrounds will demonstrate significant behavioural improvements. Thus, the interaction between parents' socio-economic status (PSES) and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) is not necessarily linear but may be shaped by multiple contextual variables.

In Nigerian secondary school system, guidance counsellors play a pivotal role in implementing therapeutic interventions. However, their effectiveness is influenced by school policies, class sizes, and available resources, which may differ based on the socioeconomic profile of the students' families (Ekundayo & Aremu, 2020). Understanding how the parents' socio-economic status (PSES) moderates Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) impact can help counsellors adapt their techniques and allocate resources more efficiently. The paucity of research on the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in managing adolescents' maladjustment in Nigeria represents a

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critical gap in the literature. While some studies have examined the role of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) in educational achievement, few have investigated its influence on therapeutic outcomes in school settings, particularly with integrative approaches like Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT). Addressing this gap could inform policies that enhance the equity and cultural sensitivity of school-based psychological services.

The present study, therefore, seeks to explore the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the management of social maladjustment behaviours using Cognitive Analytic Therapy among senior secondary school students in Benin City. By examining whether and how parents' socio-economic status (PSES) influences Cognitive Analytic Therapy's (CAT) effectiveness, this study aims to contribute to the development of more targeted, inclusive, and context-sensitive intervention strategies. Ultimately, the findings of this research have the potential to guide education stakeholders, school counsellors, and policymakers in creating interventions that bridge socioeconomic disparities in behavioural and psychological health outcomes. This will not only enhance the well-being of socially maladjusted adolescents but also contribute to a more inclusive and supportive educational environment in Benin City and similar contexts.

This study is anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979 and Cognitive Analytic Therapy Theory formalised in 1984 by Dr. Anthony Ryle, both of which provide complementary perspectives on how individual behaviours are shaped and modified within broader social contexts. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory posits that human development occurs through complex interactions between the individual and multiple environmental systems - the microsystem, mesosystem, exo-system, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2020).

The chronosystem is the final level and relates to environmental changes in an individual's life, which may be predictable or unpredictable. The macrosystem represents social norms, culture, political and economic conditions; the exosystem incorporates the formal and informal social structures such as the parents and family members, friends and acquaintances, media and the local government; the mesosystem creates a connection for functionality for the microsystem. The microsystem is the first level, and it is used to describe the things that have direct contact with an individual and their immediate environment. In this framework, parents' socioeconomic status is a critical component of the microsystem that directly influences the adolescent's experiences, access to resources, and opportunities for positive development. Parents' socio-economic status (PSES) also indirectly shapes interactions in other systems, such as the school environment and peer networks, thereby affecting responsiveness to therapeutic interventions.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy Theory integrates cognitive-behavioural and psychodynamic principles to explain how early relational experiences lead to the development of maladaptive patterns of thinking, feeling, and relating (Ryle & Kerr, 2020). Cognitive Analytic Theory emphasises identifying these repetitive relational patterns, known as reciprocal roles, and collaboratively reformulating them with the client to enable healthier responses. Mensah and Boateng (2021) further strengthened the theoretical framework of this study by positing that

cognitive-based therapies foster emotional stability and adaptive functioning across different social contexts. The approach is particularly relevant for adolescents exhibiting social maladjustment behaviours, as it helps them understand the origins of their difficulties and develop strategies to replace maladaptive behaviours with more adaptive ones. The integration of these two theoretical perspectives provides a robust framework for examining the interaction between parents' socio-economic status (PSES) and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in managing social maladjustment. While Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) focuses on individual-level cognitive and relational changes, Bronfenbrenner's theory situates these changes within broader environmental and socio-economic contexts. This dual lens allows for a more nuanced understanding of how family background factors, such as SES, may enhance or hinder the therapeutic process and outcomes in school settings.

By applying this integrated theoretical framework, the present study investigated not only the direct effects of Cognitive Analytic Therapy Theory (CAT) on social maladjustment behaviours but also how these effects vary across different parents' socio-economic status (PSES) groups (Garcia & Chen, 2023). The insights gained will inform culturally and socioeconomically responsive interventions that can more effectively address behavioural issues among adolescents in Benin City and similar environments.

### **Statement of the problem**

Social maladjustment behaviours such as truancy, aggression, defiance, and withdrawal remain pressing challenges among senior secondary school students in Benin City, Nigeria. These behaviours can disrupt learning, strain peer relationships, and undermine academic achievement, as well as influence peers. Despite the presence of school counsellors and intervention programmes, many students continue to exhibit persistent maladaptive patterns, suggesting that existing strategies may not be fully effective or contextually sensitive.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) has shown promise in modifying dysfunctional relational patterns and improving emotional regulation among adolescents, especially at the secondary school level (Imafidon, 2022). However, there is still a limitation about how contextual variables like the parents' socioeconomic status (PSES) may influence its effectiveness. The parents' socio-economic status could shape an adolescent's developmental environments by affecting access to resources, parental involvement, and home stability. This makes it a potential moderator in therapy outcomes. The researchers observed that the pronounced economic inequalities among the populace of Edo State might create unique barriers to therapeutic intervention, such as limited parental engagement, financial constraints, and exposure to community stressors. This could reduce the benefits of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) interventions. Conversely, students from higher-socio-economic status families may receive more consistent reinforcement of therapeutic gains due to greater resource availability and parental support (Kumuyi et al., 2021).

Yet, there is a lack of empirical evidence on whether parents' socio-economic status significantly interacts with Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in managing social maladjustment behaviours in this population. The absence of such evidence creates a knowledge gap that limits the ability of school counsellors and policymakers to design interventions that are equitable and effective across socioeconomic strata. Without

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understanding the interaction between parents' socio-economic status (PSES) and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) outcomes, interventions risk being less impactful for disadvantaged students, thereby perpetuating behavioural and educational inequalities. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by exploring the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the management of social maladjustment behaviours using Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) among senior secondary school students in Benin City.

### **Research question**

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. What is the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the treatment of social maladjustment of senior secondary school students using Cognitive Analytic Therapy?

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho1:** There is no significant interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the treatment of social maladjustment of senior secondary school students using Cognitive Analytic Therapy.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design, using pre-test, post-test and non-equivalent control groups. The study investigated the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the cause-effect relationship in exposing the experimental groups to treatments programmes. The population of this study was five thousand, seven hundred and ninety-four (5,794) registered students in mixed public senior secondary school II (SS2) in Benin Metropolis (Edo State Post Primary Education Board, Statistics Department, 2025). Benin Metropolis is made up of four (4) Local Government Areas namely; Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo and Ovia North-East (Edo Geographical Information Services, EDOGIS, 2024). The sample size for the study was 38 (13 females and 25 males) and 31 (14 females and 17 males) students respectively in the treatment (Cognitive Analytic Therapy) and control group from SS2. These samples were selected using the multi-phase sampling procedure across three stages and the selected schools were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The participants were socially maladjusted students identified using the Social Maladjustment Scale (SMS) in their intact class. They were considered appropriate for this study because the students in each class were adolescents who are either perpetrators or victims of socially maladjusted behaviours. The intervention was administered to all members of the class, however, only those who were socially maladjusted were considered as the participants.

The instrument for data collections was a questionnaire titled Social Maladjustment Scale (SMS). The sub-sections of the instrument were adapted and modified from Ibadin and Akpede (2021), the revised scoring scheme for the classification of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) in Nigeria; an assessment of school maladjustment problems by Peralta-sachez et al. (2009); and social maladjustment scale developed by Wiggins (1969). The instrument has two sections (A and B); A has nine items on demographic information and parents' socio-economic status (PSES) while section B has 40 items from seven sub-categories to measure social maladjustment.

To establish the validity of the instrument used for this study, the Social Maladjustment Scale (SMS) was subjected to face and content validity by two psychometric experts. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha statistics, and a coefficient value of 0.93 was obtained. This shows that the instrument is reliable based on the measure of internal consistency. The instrument collected responses on a five-point scale from 'always: 5 points, often: 4 points, rarely: 3 points, occasionally: 2 points and never: 1 point. The instrument was used for pre-test and post-test data collection to determine the effects of treatment on social maladjustment behaviours by comparing them with the pre-test scores.

The post-test scores of the Social Maladjustment Scale (SMS) were used to answer the research questions and test the null hypothesis. The data obtained were analysed using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and, inferential statistics of Two-Way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test for the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the treatment.

The treatment package was administered to participants in their intact class for a period of six (6) weeks with twelve (12) sessions of forty (40) minutes per session. During this process, the researchers showed empathy and ensured the respondents were relaxed and cooperative, friendly and established comfortable relationship through good rapport with them, assurance of confidentiality and communication of warmth, genuineness and trust. The researchers carefully explained the instructions on the instrument to the respondents and opportunities were given to the participants to ask questions before, during and after the period of their response to the scale. Efforts were also made to ensure that the classroom and its environment were conducive for the administration, devoid of noise and any act of distraction. The treatment was carried out in three phases, adopting the pre-test, treatment and post-test procedures for each phase respectively.

## **Presentation of results**

**Research question 1:** What is the interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the treatment of social maladjustment of senior secondary school students using Cognitive Analytic Therapy?

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation of social maladjustment in the experimental and control groups at pre-test

<b>Groups</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation (SD)</b>
Cognitive Analytic	36	76.89	26.23
Control	31	65.52	14.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>71.21</b>	<b>5.69</b>

The analysis on Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of social maladjustment in the experimental and control groups at pre-test. From the table, the Cognitive Analytic, had N = 36, Mean = 76.89, Std. Dev. = 26.23 while Control Group had N=31, Mean = 65.52, Std. Dev.= 14.76. Total participants were N = 67, Mean = 71.21 Std. Dev. = 5.69.

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of the subjects in both CAT and control groups by PSES showing the social maladjustment mean scores at post-test

Groups	PSES	Mean	Std	N
CAT	Low	48.75	10.02	12
	Moderate	50.64	10.82	22
	High	39.00	1.41	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>49.36</b>	<b>10.44</b>	<b>36</b>
Control	Low	61.69	14.39	13
	Moderate	72.47	12.64	15
	High	71.33	2.08	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67.84</b>	<b>13.64</b>	<b>31</b>

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the subjects in both CAT and control groups by PSES showing the social maladjustment mean scores at post-test. The mean scores as well as the standard deviation scores by PSES (low/moderate/high) for each of the groups are presented.

**Ho1:** There is no significant interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the treatment of social maladjustment of senior secondary school students using Cognitive Analytic Therapy.

**Table 3:** Two-way ANCOVA on interaction effect of PSES on treatment of social maladjustment of adolescents using cognitive analytic therapy

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6796.798	6	1132.800	8.202	.000
Intercept	16068.518	1	16068.518	116.345	.000
Pretest	5.845	1	5.845	.042	.838
Group	3579.186	1	3579.186	25.915	.000
SESTYPE	657.853	2	328.927	2.382	.101
Group * SESTYPE	475.634	2	237.817	1.722	.187
Error	8286.665	60	138.111		
Total	239776.000	67			
Corrected Total	15083.463	66			

The table 3 shows an F-value of 1.722 and a p-value of .187 for the interaction effect of PSES, at alpha level of .05. Since the p-value is greater than alpha value (.187 > .05), the null hypothesis is retained; hence there is no significant interaction effect of PSES on the treatment of social maladjustment using CAT.

### Discussion of findings

The result revealed that the effect of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) on reducing social maladjustment did not differ significantly across levels of parents' socio-economic status. This implies that Cognitive Analytic Therapeutic efficacy may be independent of socio-economic influences, demonstrating its universal applicability across diverse family contexts. Similar outcomes have been reported by Lopez and Reyes (2023), who found that structured

psychotherapeutic interventions focusing on self-reflection and behavioural reorganization are effective across socio-economic strata when adolescents are actively engaged in the therapeutic process. Likewise, Olsen et al. (2022) observed that cognitive and analytic approaches help adolescents modify maladaptive relational patterns regardless of their parents' economic background, emphasizing that treatment fidelity and participant's motivation are stronger predictors of success than socio-economic factors.

The non-significant interaction result may also suggest that parents' socio-economic status (PSES) does not moderate the relationship between Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) and social adjustment. Perhaps, this is because Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) emphasizes intrapersonal insight, emotional awareness, and cognitive restructuring skills that are universally relevant to all adolescents (Hawkins & Kim, 2021). As Abdullahi and Adebayo (2024) noted that therapies that focus on self-understanding and adaptive coping mechanisms tend to yield consistent outcomes across socio-economic lines since they target core psychological processes rather than environmental variables.

Furthermore, the lack of interaction may reflect the standardization of intervention conditions, which minimized socio-economic variability in participants' experiences during therapy sessions. This aligns with findings by Nguyen and Park (2022), who reported that well-controlled therapeutic environments can neutralize socio-economic differences, allowing all participants to benefit equally from structured interventions. In essence, this study reinforces the position that Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) is a flexible and inclusive intervention capable of addressing social maladjustment among adolescents regardless of socio-economic background. This supports the growing consensus that psychotherapeutic interventions emphasizing cognitive restructuring and relational awareness can serve as universal tools for behavioural correction and emotional stability (Mensah & Boateng, 2021; Garcia & Chen, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of parents' socio-economic status (PSES) on the efficacy of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) in the treatment of social maladjustment of adolescents. This implies that the impact of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) on improving adolescents' social adjustment was not influenced by parental socio-economic background. The result suggests that CAT produced comparable outcomes among adolescents from low, middle, and high socio-economic groups, demonstrating that socio-economic variations did not moderate the effectiveness of the therapeutic intervention. This finding supports the view that CAT, as a structured and insight-oriented therapeutic model, facilitates behavioural and emotional improvement across socio-economic lines.

Moreover, the non-significant interaction effect underscores the inclusiveness and universality of Cognitive Analytic Therapy as a tool for addressing social maladjustment among adolescents. Since the intervention focuses on self-reflection, understanding maladaptive relational patterns, and cognitive restructuring, it targets internal psychological processes that transcend external socio-economic differences. Therefore, CAT can be considered a robust and adaptable counselling approach that can be applied effectively within diverse adolescent

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populations to promote social competence, emotional regulation, and healthier interpersonal relationships.

### Recommendations

Based on the finding, the following recommendations were made:

1. Integration of Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT) into school counselling programmes: School authorities should incorporate Cognitive Analytic Therapy into guidance and counselling services for managing adolescents exhibiting maladjusted behaviours.
2. Equitable access to counselling interventions: Counselling services should be made available to all students regardless of their socio-economic background to promote inclusivity and equal developmental opportunities.
3. Capacity building for counsellors: Training workshops and professional development programmes should be organized to equip counsellors with the knowledge and skills necessary for implementing CAT effectively.

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