

**Research Article**



# Effect of Reality and Behavioral Therapy in the Treatment of Truancy in Students at Jigawa State Birnin-Kudu Government College, Nigeria

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## Abstract:

This study determined the relative effectiveness of reality and behavioral therapy in the treatment of truancy among engineering students in Birnin-kudu Jigawa State, Nigeria. Three objectives guided the study and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 significance level. The study subjects included all truant students attending the public university's Birnin Kudu, who were nominated by their classmates and principal and confirmed on the class register. Among all truants, 36 truants were randomly selected and randomly assigned to 3 experimental groups. The tools for data collection were the attendance sheet and data form, which recorded the total absences of students before and after treatment.

**Key Words: Behaviour therapy, Truancy, Treatment of Truancy**

## Introduction

Education is a major key determinant to societal development in any nation and Nigeria cannot be an exception. The relevance of educating the youth in Nigeria has received serious attention by successive regimes both civilian and military. Nigerian Government one after the other has been according high priority to educational sector by allocating the lion's share in the national budget almost every year. It is evident at least in Jigawa State that there has been an increase in school enrolment over the years because of the serious importance attached to education by the present administration. The State Inspectorate of Evaluation and Monitoring unit (SEIMU) (2009) reported that there has been a phenomenal increase in secondary school enrolment in the State from 2007 to date which was attributed to the serious concern attached to education by the government. But with all the seriousness attached to education there is one problem that has been negating this all important venture and that is students' truancy which is one of the delinquencies committed by youth in Nigeria today (Mangal, 2008). It is so serious as rightly

observed by Egbochukwu (2008) that it often leads to other unwanted behaviours such as maladjustment, poor academic performance, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, petty theft, shoplifting, stealing, academic underachievement, substance abuse and even civil disturbances and social unrest.

To Adana (1987), Alhassan (1992) and Carol (1996) truancy simply means keeping away from school or leaving school without permission. It is unjustified absence from home/school on a student's own initiative without the permission of parents or the school. Halilu (2001) explains that truancy is the act of keeping away from school for no good reason, neglecting school duties, idling away school time and wandering around the town during school hours. Anagbogu (2002) and Peck (2002) classified truancy under the group of disciplinary problems known as act of deviances. These groups of disciplinary problems according to Olugbega (2002) and Aggarwal (2007) are usually directed against the established rules of parents and the school including going out of school without permission, avoiding wearing of

school uniforms, failure to serve punishment, and carrying out unlawful duties.

In Jigawa State, there is a growing concern about truancy in public schools as reported in a number of studies by Victor (2008), Sara (2008), Danmalam (2009) and Sara, Shuaibu & Ismail (2012). It is a source of worry and a major concern to the State government and parents alike, this is because not only educated persons are needed in the society so as to meet the stated objectives in the national policy on education, but because Jigawa State is educationally backward compared to other Northern States like Kano, Kaduna and Katsina. If this trend continues, meaning if truancy cannot be curtailed, Jigawa State cannot meet the challenges ahead educationally.

The causes of truancy in Jigawa State secondary schools could be associated to socio-economic, cultural and psychological as well as the effect of peer group on the students. All the factors listed were identified with drug addiction, stealing, prostitution and delinquency. It is economically ill for both the government and parents who spend huge amount of money on such students and in the long run end up without realizing the objectives of spending such money. Socially, the situation is unbearable as evidence from Dutse and Birnin-Kudu area offices of the welfare board shows separately that most of the perpetrators of social ills in urban centers are made up of truants and school drop-outs.

The incidence and prevalence of truancy in the College as a case study for generalization shows common causes which include home or family related factors that rested on number of family members, parental income level, family structure or broken home and the educational level of the parents as observed by Hassan (2008). The next was school related factors which include teachers' attitude towards teaching and learning, the general school atmosphere and principals' leadership style. Others are both psychological and peer group influence on school truancy.

Parents, teachers, counsellors and school heads have reacted in different ways to curtail truancy among students. There has been applications such as corporal punishment, scolding, verbal abuse, denial of love, suspension, caning, removal of

privileges and expulsion meted to reduce or eliminate truancy which appeared not to have lasting effect. Ekennia (1991) and Eniola and Adebisi (2005) affirm that if behaviour is unwholesome, it needs therapeutic programme to help remedy such behaviour.

It is against this backdrop that this study is focused at ascertaining the effectiveness of Behaviour modification therapies using reality and behaviour counselling in remedying truancy among the students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State. In this study truancy is defined as unexcused absence by the students from school for a period of two days in a week or eight days in a month which constituted 30% absence. The techniques of behaviour modification therapies have been proven effective in the management of different unwanted behaviours among children. Available literature indicated that (Wilde, 1992, Zions, 1996, Wilson, 1996; Ezeyi, 2003; Saleh, 2004; Usman, 2005; Mbahi, 2006; Prenzlau, 2006 and Mora, 2007) used reality and behaviour therapies in treating behaviour problems like bullying, late coming, examination failure, absenteeism and truancy among school children.

Contemporary Counsellors need to employ interventions which are effective and designed to help students acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills for functioning more effectively in the school, home, and community and in the larger society. Group counselling using reality and behaviour therapies with the truant students can be viewed as one of the interventions that will enable these students to deal with the truancy problems that have already surfaced in their lives (Corey & Corey, 1992). Dryden (1994) pointed out that when effective counselling with problem students is employed in the schools, the participants are better able to deal with some of their dysfunctional thinking and behaviour before these factors become disciplinary problems for them.

Reality therapy is an approach to counselling developed by William Glasser in the 1960's, it is considered a form of cognitive behavioural therapy which stresses on how the three R's of Reality, Responsibility and Right relate to person's life situation. The therapy maintains that the individual is suffering from a socially universal human condition rather than a mental

illness. Its focus is applicable to individual's present behaviour (here and now actions of the client and the ability to create and choose better future) not digging the past behaviour.

Behaviour counselling is a process in which the counsellor adopts a variety of learning techniques to help clients learn the behaviour necessary to solve their problems. It is experienced to help individuals change their behaviours in order to solve problems confronting them. It has effectively been used to treat poor attitude of parents towards Western education by Dakasku (2001), Ezeyi (2003), Sawwan (2006) and Dawa (2007) for example used the therapy to reduce poor attitude to western education by parents, problem of academic underachievement, problem of social adjustment, fear and examination anxiety so as to enhance performance in Physics.

This study seeks to discover if there is a significant difference between two group counselling interventions from behaviour modification therapy and which is best suited for secondary school students. The study examined the significant difference between the interventions in helping these students to discard their dysfunctional thinking and behaviour, replace this with a more effective cognitive approach to their problems and move forward toward completing their education in a timely fashion. This will enable them enjoy a happier and more satisfying school life. Numerous techniques of counselling are available but are not employed in our schools which if given a chance will be accorded with high degrees of success. One of the approaches employed with young people is the cognitive-behavioural approach to counselling (Corey & Corey, 1992).

### Statement of the Problem

Counselling therapy and behaviour change are critical elements in guidance and counselling education. In fact one of the major functions of a counselling theory is envisaged in behaviour change. The modification of behaviour depends greatly on a number of factors including the counsellors' function and professional competence (Idowu, 2003). Some empirical studies reported that measures adopted by counsellors and teachers in secondary schools in order to solve behaviour problems including truancy failed to make any

significant impact because counselling therapies are not used (Adana, 1987, Mcgory, 1987; Wilde, 1992; Kolo, 2001; Saleh, 2004; Eniola and Adebisi, 2005; Mora, 2007 and Dawa 2007.

Furthermore, Jigawa State Inspectorate, Evaluation and Monitoring Unit (SEIMU, 2009) reported that persistence truancy recorded in secondary schools in Jigawa State was attributed to inadequate counselling services and lack of applying appropriate counselling techniques by counsellors and teachers. Esere, Idowu and Durosaro (2010) also reported that what was known was the use of measures like corporal punishment, caning, detention after school, removal of privileges and even scolding. They concluded that researches on the effectiveness of counselling therapy in the treatment of delinquency and other behaviour problems is scanty and at an infancy stage. It is against this background that this study compared the relative effectiveness of Reality and Behaviour therapies in the treatment of truancy among the students of Government College, Birnin- Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria.

### Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of both Reality and Behaviour therapies in treating truancy among the students of Government College Birnin -kudu Jigawa State, Nigeria. The study in specific terms determined :

1. Effect of reality therapy on truancy treatment among the truant students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria
2. Effect of behaviour therapy on truancy treatment among the truant students of Government College Birnin- Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria.
3. Comparative effectiveness of reality and behaviour therapies in the treatment of truancy among students of Government College Birin-Kudu, Jigawa State

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H<sub>01</sub>: Reality therapy has no significant effect on truancy treatment among the truant students after ten weeks of counselling therapy

H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>: Behaviour therapy has no significant effect on truancy treatment among the truant students after ten weeks of counselling therapy

H<sub>0</sub><sub>3</sub>: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of Reality and Behaviour therapies

in the treatment of truancy among truant students after ten weeks of counselling therapy

### Methodology

This study is a quasi-experimental research that adopted a pre-test and post-test treatment and control group design. The study has three experimental groups comprising of two treatment groups of reality and behaviour counselling therapies and a control group. The dependent variable was the abnormal behaviour of the students towards school attendance (truancy) as measured by the attendance register. A study such as this one utilized experimental design because the subjects (respondents) are not large.

The target population of this study was all the truant students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria. The school was purposely selected because it was noted to have a high truancy rate in the state as highlighted by Victor (2008) and Danmalam (2009). The actual population for this study were the truant students in JSS I to SSIII who were two hundred and eighty six (286) in number.

Out of the total number of truants, the researcher used thirty six (36) respondents this is because according to Osuala (2001), small group is found to be more successful in experimental research. The sample was randomized into three groups of twelve students each. Through the simple random sampling technique, equal number of the truants (12) was assigned into the three experimental groups. The size of each of the groups was limited to twelve (12) truants because Osuala (2001), Best & Khan (2005), Nworgu (2006), and Emaikwu (2007) reported that in experimentation, small group interaction was found to be more useful and successful. Furthermore, Olusakin and Aremu (2009) argued that six to eight clients are ideal for effective group counselling and group therapy. They further stated that with increased size,

members experience less direct involvement and participation.

The instrument used in this study was student's data Proforma. Attendance register was used by the researchers to get the students absences before and after treatment. In the school the register was used to make roll call and take daily attendance of the students both in the morning and afternoon. The data for this study which constituted the students' absences before and after treatment was then transferred by the researchers to the personal data proforma which was readily used for the data analysis. The proforma provides useful information on the students' background in terms of their parents, nature of work, salary, education and even the students' first name.

The method of data collection in this study involved observation of the attendance register before and after treatment and the experimental procedure. The experiments and observations to the affected groups were done one after the other. The data for this study was collected in three phases of pre-treatment, treatment and post treatment. The control group received no treatment but was involved in the pre-test, post-test and follow up assessment periods. The students' school absences constituted the data on the students' truancy in Government College Birnin-Kudu.

The data collected in this study was the total absences of the truant students before and after treatment. The absences of the truant students were originally in the attendance register which were later transferred in to data proforma by the researchers for easier data analyses. The total absences of the truants obtained before and after treatment by the researchers was finally analyzed using the following:

H<sub>0</sub><sub>1</sub>: Descriptive Statistics for pre-test and the post-test of students' absences for control group and reality therapy group and ANCOVA.

H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>: Descriptive statistics for pre-test and the post-test of students' absences for control group and behaviour therapy group and ANCOVA.

H<sub>0</sub><sub>3</sub>: Descriptive statistics for pre-test post-test of students' of two experimental groups

and the control group and ANCOVA

The statistical assumptions underlying the appropriateness of analysis of variance in the study include: homogeneity of population variance which was confirmed by Levine’s Test of Equality of error Variances and Univariate normal score distribution in each cell. Furthermore, use of pre-test post-test design where pre-test serve as covariate while post-test as dependent variable, the use of randomization in assigning the sample and pretest was conducted prior to the start of the experiment (Uzoagulu, 2003). Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation was also computed to confirm differences in absences of students from two normal distributed scores with independent means.

**Results**

**Effects of Reality Therapy on Truancy Treatment**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** Reality therapy does not have significant effect on truancy treatment among truant students

Table 1a presents the mean absences and standard deviations of the truant student before and after treatment. The mean score which represents mean truancy shows that there was reduction in truancy among the reality therapy group while the control group did not show reduction in truancy. The mean score of reality therapy group is comparatively lower than that of control group. Reality therapy is therefore effective in truancy treatment.

**Table 1a: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test of Reality and Control Groups on Truancy Treatment**

Pre- test				Post –test		
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Control	12	45.42	3.82	12	43.25	3.82
Reality	12	43.25	3.80	12	14.42	1.44
Total	24	44.33	3.88	24	28.83	14.99

Table 1b presents the result of ANCOVA on effectiveness of reality therapy and the control group in truancy treatment. The result shows a significant difference in favour of reality therapy in the post-test scores that is after treatment while the effect of reality therapy was not significant before treatment (pre-test). The control group

however, did not indicate any change after treatment. This shows that reality therapy is effective in truancy treatment. Based on this finding therefore, the null hypothesis which states that reality therapy has no significant effect on truancy treatment is rejected.

**Table 1b: ANCOVA on the Effect of Reality Therapy on Truancy Treatment**

Variable	Type II Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P-level	Remarks
Pretest	14.095	1	14.904	1.860	.187	NS
Group	4203.813	1	4203.813	524.658	.000	Sig.
Error	168.262	21	8.92			
Total	25124.000	24				
Corrected Total	5171.333	23				

R Squared = .967 (Adjusted R Squared = .964)

**Discussion**

The study examined the effectiveness of reality and behaviour therapies in the treatment of truancy among the students of Government College, Birnin Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria. The study revealed that reality therapy had significant effect on truancy treatment among truant students

of Government College Birnin-Kudu after ten weeks of counselling treatment. This means that there was significant difference in the pre-test and post scores of the counselling therapy group of reality, while there was no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of control group. This study confirms the work of Haynes (1983), Shu’aibu (2004), Saleh (2004), Usman

(2005), Mbahi (2006) and Prenzlau (2006) who revealed that reality therapy is effective in the treatment of bullying, rumination, examination anxiety and abnormal behaviours among school children.

The results on hypothesis two revealed that behaviour therapy had significant effect on the treatment of truancy among truant students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria. There was no significant difference in the pre-test scores of the two groups which means they were equal before treatment. But when the results were compared after treatment the post test scores of the experimental group II (behaviour therapy) showed significant difference, while there was no significant difference in the post-test scores of the control group. The result of the study confirmed the observations made by Hauk (1995), Ukoha (2003), Chima & Nnodum (2004) and Mora (2007) who found that behaviour therapy was effective in the treatment of many aspects of behaviour problems like aggression, self esteem, late coming and truancy.

Hypothesis three of this study examined the differences in effectiveness of reality therapy, behaviour counselling and control group in truancy treatment after ten sessions of counselling treatments. The results show that there was significant difference in the post- test scores of reality and behaviour therapies while there was no difference in the control group. This means that there was significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores on the experimental group, while there was no difference in the pretest and post test scores of the control group. The interpretation of this result shows that the two therapies given to the two experimental groups were effective in truancy treatment, while the control group which did not receive any therapy showed no improvement in school attendance.

The effectiveness of reality therapy supports the result of Eniola and Adebisi's (2005) and Chima & Nnodum's (2008) who corroborates that reality therapy is effective in the treatments of social competence among physically challenged and social adjustment among retirees. The effectiveness of behaviour therapy supports Zions (1996), Ezeji, (2003) and Dakasku (2001) who in their separate studies reported that the therapy was useful in the treatment of behaviour and attitudinal

problems. The outcome of this study may also be attributed to the willingness of the students to participate and modify their behaviours and their willingness to unlearn their negative behaviours towards attendance and also use rationality to change the bad behaviour of truancy by becoming highly responsible which is the regular school attendance. Ukanyirioha (2002) , Onunkwo & Unachukwu (2003), Sawwan (2006) and Olusakin and Aremu (2009) had in their separate studies stressed the importance of the participants' motivation during the counselling sessions, recognition of the need for counselling by themselves and their willingness to participate in the process of counselling as basic to the success of any counselling encounter.

The overall result indicated that reality therapy is superior to the behaviour therapy. This means that there was significant difference in the post-test scores of the two counselling therapies group. The interpretation of the result shows that the treatment given to the two groups is effective but that of reality is superior to the behaviour therapy as clearly shown by the Scheffe post-hoc analysis. The finding of this study is consistent with that of Fadile (1995), Dawa (2007) and Chima & Nnodum (2008) in which experimental treatments tend to be effective in correcting abnormal behaviour. These findings are consistent with Warren & Zquorides (1991), Joel (1998) and Olusakin & Aremu (2008) who revealed that psychotherapy done through this form of treatment for many kinds of psychological problem of individual including those with emotional, behavioural problem or mental illness is effective. Primarily, verbal communication is effective, when a person discusses his/her problem one-on-one with a therapist or counsellor, the counsellor tries to understand the person's problem and helps the individual to change his/her thoughts, feelings or behaviours by proffering alternative solutions.

Chima & Nnodum (2008) further indicated that reality therapy was found useful in making it real to the clients to see plainly the plausibility of their actions and to show them that they are not doing the right thing. Adeniran (2011) also cautioned that unless the steps of reality therapy are followed faithfully and religiously it may undermine its usefulness. Adeniran (2011)

therefore submitted that reality therapy has the capacity to show the clients realistically what he/she should do to stop an unwanted behaviour which is not desirable.

Behaviour therapy as observed by Zions (1993) has become a popular form of desensitization to modifying anti-social behaviours in the classroom. Generally however, cooperation of the client is seen as necessary and more resilient approaches focused on the clients' beliefs about what they are able to do. This is what is referred to as behaviour modification counselling. The study finally shows that both the therapies (reality and behaviour) are important in reducing the rate of truancy as a school offence and an improvement in attendance among the students of Government College, Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria.

### Summary

The study determined the effectiveness of reality and behaviour therapies in checking truancy among the students of Government College, Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State, Nigeria. Statement of the problem indicated that school attendance is vital in enhancing academic performance and discipline among the students while truancy is an anti-social behaviour in any school which can jeopardize chances of achieving educational goals. Data analysis and statistics for hypotheses one, two, three, were ANCOVA, and descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The data collected was analyzed and the results are as follow. Reality therapy is effective in the treatment of truancy among the students and hence improvement in attendance. Behaviour therapy is also effective in checking truancy. Both therapies indicated differences in the treatment of truancy based on the age of the students and socio-economic status of the truant parents. The study also reveals that reality therapy is superior to behaviour therapy in treating truancy in Government College Birnin-Kudu. Based on the findings some recommendations were made; counsellors could use any of the above counselling therapies in checking truancy among the students.

### Conclusion

From the findings reported in this study the following conclusions are made:-

The two counselling therapies were effective in reducing students' truancy and improving attendance, while the subjects who did not receive any treatment failed to show any improvement in their level of attendance and therefore the level of truancy among them remained high. Reality therapy was more effective than behaviour therapy in truancy treatment among the students of Government College Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa State.

Finally, it was also revealed that truancy is detrimental to educational achievements in general. The attendance register used in this study is an appropriate tool of assessing school truancy and the proforma was also appropriate in collecting relevant information about the students. The absence of students before and after treatment portrays the effects of different counselling therapies used in the study. The absences after treatment in particular showed how effective a particular therapy is in relation to another, this gave at a glance the actual situations in terms of truancy and attendance by the students.

### Recommendations

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

1. Treatments of reality and behaviour therapies are recommended for adoption by counsellors in Government College Birnin-Kudu and any secondary school in Jigawa State as well as Nigeria as a whole.
2. School Counsellors could organize workshops on truancy control using reality and behaviour counselling therapies which will involve teachers, non academic staff and students.
3. The school administrators and policy makers should also endeavour to be more realistic in terms of making policy on school attendance. To this end, the study recommends that training of counsellors should be a priority of the Ministry of Education so as to assist students with delinquent behaviour problems like truancy.

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