



Problem-Solving Oriented Group Approach for Reducing Concerns Associated with Transition to Tertiary Institutions Among Senior Secondary School Students in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design of pre-test, post-test and control group involving (two treatment groups and one control group), with problem-solving oriented group counselling approach which involves social skills training and modelling counselling technique adopted for reducing various concerns associated with transition to tertiary institutions among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Paired sample t-test and Analysis of Co-Variance (ANCOVA) were used to test the five null hypotheses formulated for the study. All the hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that a problem-solving oriented group approach of social skills training, $t = 9.45$; $p < .05$) and modelling intervention, 13.32 ; $p < .05$) were effective in reducing concerns associated with transition to tertiary institutions among the secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. It was also found that differential effect existed between the two counselling techniques used in the study ($t = 2.84$; $p < .05$) and there was no gender difference in the participants post-test results of the two counselling groups ($F = .663$ and 1.227 ; $p > .05$).

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from one level of education to another can be problematic for the majority of students more specifically, the transition from secondary school to tertiary institutions such as University, Polytechnic and College of Education where there is a number of ravaging paroxysm of problems such as cultism, drug use and campus unrest among other undesirable behaviours. This transition could be challenging in the sense that students have to undergo serial changes in their accustomed socio-emotional, psychological and physical environments. Thus, students' wellbeing needs to be cared for as they transit from a particular stage of education to another.

A student's transition can be complicated by social, emotional and physiological changes that can negatively influence their learning processes. However, the school that has the grip of understanding of how these changes could affect students' wellbeing is in better position to assist the students to make positive adjustments to their new academic environment. This is because, literature have reiterated that many students at secondary school level find transition to tertiary institution as a major cultural shock and distress in their lives (Scager,2016; Christie, Tett, Cree, Housel & McCume, 2014) due to the different teaching and learning approaches and school expectations. Researchers (Chan 2017) noted that secondary education paved ways for opportunities among students to develop competency in social, academic and information skills. However, it is more revealing that teaching and learning in some secondary schools focused majorly on grades and scores and with less emphasis on independent learning skills and personal qualities development (Mohammadyari, 2015).

The term "transition" according to Jeyagowri and Ilankumaran (2018), is an effective inner process in the mind which happens while pupils experience the shift from the commonplace to the unfamiliar, reacting towards cultural, social and individual's difficulties in the behaviour and it may happen to individuals more rapidly to influence a viable progress in life. Students make many transitions in lives such as moving from home tutelage to beginning early childhood education. Others are change in year levels within a school (for instance, promotion from one class to another, JSS class to SSS class); transfer from one school to another; from primary to secondary school, from secondary to higher or tertiary education, and from school to training and employment. Amrieh (2016) viewed transition in education as shift in the three major education systems that is; when students move from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school and from high school to college. In Nigerian context, this can be interpreted as moving from primary to junior secondary school, from junior secondary school to senior secondary school and from senior secondary school to tertiary institution (such as; university, polytechnic and college of education).

In the context of this study, transition is the movement of secondary school students who are waiting for admission into higher institutions of learning in furtherance of their educational goals. The students' frustrating experiences towards the new tertiary institutions are conceptualized as transition concerns in this study. New students may experience problems such as making friends, relating with lecturers and staff, completing registrations, locating places and seeking of accommodation. The higher education transition could involve transfer to a new urban area or town with different living styles that some new secondary school students are not accustomed. In this regards, students may face frequent emotional outbursts and the feeling of intense fear and anxiety. Due to

transition from secondary schools to tertiary institutions, some students feel homesick for a number of factors such as meeting new and unfamiliar faces and missing the old structures and routines, seeing a large classroom consisting of students from different home backgrounds and so on.

Transiting from secondary schools to tertiary institutions could become very challenging for some students due to significant changes experience in term of academic, social, emotional, physical or developmental processes, which may have adverse affect on their educational performances. School transition is particularly an important period in the life of students with a shift in many aspects of their lives. For some students, transition to higher level of education could be stressful with attendant consequences in terms of behavioural and psychological problems, which might need some psychological interventions. Researches in the recent time have indicated that across various transitional processes, students often experience changes in relationship with peers, parents and teachers. For instance, McGee, Ward, Gibsons and Harlow (2003) found in their study that students often experienced difficulty following their transition, and their likelihood of dropping out from school is high. The authors maintained further that poor transitions of students to school often affect their overall wellbeing and their future career success and achievement. Behavioural problems often become evident after a school transition, which is particularly true when students interact with a new set of students after gaining entrance into new schools.

Schools should be thinking about the wellbeing and educational needs of the adolescent students and responding appropriately to the changes that are occurring to them (Flook, 2019), and as part of this response to adolescent students' needs, schools should identify which groups of students are the most vulnerable (that is; most at risk students). Some of the threats to students' successful transition to school might be due to 'physiological normal change' of the body of an adolescent student and perhaps, other factors could be environmental in nature. According Flook (2019), negative emotions like anxiety, self-doubt and fear of failure reduce the students' brain capacity to process information and learn properly.

In this regard, there are counselling approaches that schools can adopt in assisting the students with transitional concerns to overcome their serial challenges. Example of such counselling approaches is Problem-Solving Oriented Group Approach, which includes Modelling, Social-Skills Training and other related counselling techniques. Problem-Solving oriented Group Approach is the process of overcoming difficulties and challenges encountered in the attainment of a goal or objective among a group. It is the act of defining a problem, determining the cause of the problem, identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for a solution, and implementing a solution among the identified group.

The Problem-solving oriented group approach in counselling is explicitly interactive in nature and it influences human behaviour. Rather than just a linear planning and decision-making process, it is more elaborative efforts that involve multiple strategies that allows for full participation of the affected clients. This implies that traditional scientific properties, such as prediction and precision, should not be expected in all stages of the planning process. Instead, emphasis is placed on creating a participatory process that will allow provision of relevant information on interests, values, obstacles, and consequences so that they can be incorporated into response analysis.

A problem-solving oriented transition group was based on the empirical evidence which suggests that when negative cognitions that were maintaining any form of maladaptive behaviour in an individual is altered, positive thinking may be increased and as such,

decreasing worries and fears that are underlining school transition of students (Vassilopoulos, Diakogiorgi, Brouzous, Moberly, and Chastioti, 2018). This school-based intervention was designed to be comprehensive, relatively short in length and number of sessions, and to be delivered in a group with interventions that include; social skills training and modelling. The main purpose of this paper was to describe a problem-focused intervention group for transition to tertiary institution and establishing the efficacies of the adopted counselling strategies using a quasi-experimental design of pre-test, post-test and control group, which serves as control for intervening variables such as maturation, with no randomization of subjects. Thus, the study hypothesized that:

There will be no significant effect of social skills training on tertiary institution transition concerns of the participants; There will be no significant effect of modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns of the participants; There will be no differential effect between social skills training and modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns among the participants; Male and female participants exposed to social skills training will not differ in their responses to the treatment; and Male and female participants exposed to modelling will not differ in their responses to the treatment.

Some earlier studies indicated that female students are more likely to become anxious about school transition than the males (Ashar et al., 2017). In addition to that, previous studies have also established that anxieties attributable to school transition can be experimentally abridged by altering maladaptive cognitions that lead to the anxieties (Cox, Bamford, and Lau, 2015).

2. METHODS

The researchers adopted a pre-test, post-test control group quasi-experimental design, which holds that researchers make manipulation of the condition or phenomenon under investigation when other variables are held constant. The population of this study comprised all SSS 3 students that were experiencing school-transition related anxieties. The sampling method employed was purposive sampling as a result of the nature of the study which does not allow randomization of subjects of the study. The outgoing students in SSS 3 class who have transitional concerns are involved in the study. Forty-five (45) students were purposively selected to participate in the study.

The selection of participants was based on similarity in variables like geographical location, age group, social, cultural and ethnic background and mandatorily, the selection was based on students' experience of school transition concerns. The three selected schools were randomly assigned to two intervention groups and one control labelled as group A, B and C. The group A is the social skills training group, the group B is the modelling group; while group C is the control group. Fifteen (15) participants were selected for each group. They were ranked in the order of their dispositions to the 20 items on the School Transition Concerns Questionnaire (STCQ) having been diligently scored and ranked accordingly.

Measures

School Transition Concerns Questionnaire (STCQ) was used to assess students' concerns on transition from secondary schools to tertiary institutions among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State. The instrument (STCQ) is a student self-reporting measure composed of 20 items designed to assess worries or concerns that students have during transition from secondary school to tertiary institutions (such as; university,

polytechnic and college of education). The items on the questionnaire were patterned on 4-point Likert type scale (Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree and Strongly Disagree).

Four seasoned lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, validated the instrument. The reports obtained from the four lecturers showed that the items contained in the instrument have content validity. Test re-test reliability technique was adopted in determining the reliability of the instrument and coefficient of .87 was obtained. This indicated that the questionnaire (STCQ) has a high measure of stability. That is, if the instrument is used in similar situations, the results would not be significantly different.

In measuring the level of transition anxiety among the respondents, the instrument was administered twice on the participants of the study in order to serve as pre-test and post-test for the study. The pre-test was conducted to establish students' level of concerns or worries in transiting from secondary schools to tertiary institutions before treatment intervention; while the post-test was done to establish the effects that the treatment interventions had on the participants.

Procedures

The study was voluntary and it took place during third term (April-July, 2021). The group members gave verbal assent to participate in the study. The pre-test of STCQ was administered on the participants who comprised two treatment groups and one control group from SSS 3 students in public schools within Ilorin metropolis, a week before the intervention programme proper. The exercise was tagged pre-test because its results were used to select students that took part in the study.

The same group of facilitators led the two intervention groups on different days of the week (that is, Wednesdays and Thursdays) for 60 minutes per intervention group and 120 minutes for the 2 groups for 6 weeks. On the completion of the intervention programme, post data was administered on the participants in both the experimental groups and control group of the study. All participants who took part in the study stayed in the groups throughout the study, although, the facilitator had taken a precautionary measure in order to cater for cases of experimental mortality that could be arisen from dropping out of participant before the end of the study, by including extra two participants in each group. However, the two extra members were later not included in data analysis for the present study having recorded no case of dropout among the entire participants.

For the purpose of ethical standard, the researchers sought the approval of the administrators of the schools that were involved in the study in the form of verbal consent, and the request was granted. Thereafter, there was assurance of confidentiality by the researchers to the participants on the information provided, which was for research purpose only. This was done in order to facilitate collection of sincere, accurate and reliable data from the participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of social skills training on tertiary institution transition concerns among senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 1 shows that, at a degree of freedom (df) of 11, the calculated t-value of 9.45 is significant ($p = .000 < .05$). This indicates that, there is a significant effect of social skills training on tertiary institution transition concerns among senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis; hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Thus, social skills training counselling technique is found to be effective in reducing students' tertiary institution transition concerns. See **Table 1**:

Table 1. Paired Sample t-test Comparing the Control Group and Post-Test Outcome of Social skills Training on Transition Concerns of participants.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Sig.
Control Post Test	13	63.85	6.854	11	9.45*	0.000
SST Post-Test	13	39.46	4.909			

* sig.at $p < 0.05$

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns among senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 2 indicates that, at a degree of freedom (df) of 11, the calculated t-value of 13.32 is significant ($p = .000 < .05$). This shows that, there is a significant effect of modelling counselling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns of senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis; hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Thus, modelling technique is effective in reducing students' tertiary institution transition concerns. See **Table 2**:

Table 2. Paired Sample t-test Comparing the Control Group and Post-Test Outcome of Modelling Technique on Transition Concerns of Participants.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Sig.
Control Post Test	13	66.38	9.260	11	13.32*	.000
Model Post-Test	13	33.15	5.226			

*Sig. at $p < 0.05$

H₀₃: There is no significant differential effect of social skills training and modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. See **Table 3**:

Table 3. Paired Sample t-test Comparing the Post-Tests Outcomes of Social Skills Training and Modelling Technique on Tertiary Institution Transition Concerns of Participants.

Variables	NO	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Sig.
Control Post Test	3	39.46	4.226	12	2.84*	.015
Model Post-Test	3	33.15	5.226			

*Sig. at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that, at a degree of freedom (df) of 12, the calculated t-value of 2.84 is significant ($p = .015 < .05$). This indicates that, there is a significant differential effect of

social skills training and modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis; hence, the hypothesis is rejected. Thus, social skills training is more effective in reducing students' tertiary institution transition concerns than modelling counselling technique.

H₀₄: Male and female participants exposed to social skills training are not significantly different in their responses to the treatment.

Table 4. ANCOVA Result Comparing Responses of Male and Female Students with Tertiary Institution Transition Concerns to Social Skills Training

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	32.091a	2	16.045	.624	.555
Intercept	291.825	1	291.825	11.349	.007
Control	7.535	1	7.535	.293	.600
Gender	17.050	1	17.050	.663	.434
Error	257.140	10	25.714		
Total	20533.000	13			
Corrected Total	289.231	12			

a. R Squared = .111 (Adjusted R Squared = -.067)

Table 4 indicates a one-way ANCOVA on male and female participants' outcome after being exposed to social skills training. The table shows that, there is no significant difference in the responses to SST of male and female secondary school students who experienced tertiary institution transition concerns in Ilorin metropolis {F (1,10) = .663, p = .434 > .05}; hence, the hypothesis which stated that male and female participants exposed to SST are not significantly different in their responses to treatment is retained. This means that, the effect of the social skills training on tertiary institution transition concerns of male and female participants is the same.

H₀₅: Male and female participants exposed to modelling are not significantly different in their response to the treatment. See **Table 5**:

Table 5. ANCOVA Result Comparing Responses of Male and Female Students with Tertiary Institution Transition Concerns to Modelling Counselling Technique

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	69.276a	2	34.638	1.340	.305
Intercept	.244	1	.244	.009	.925
Control	61.775	1	61.775	2.391	.153
Gender	32.993	1	32.993	1.277	.285
Error	258.416	10	25.842		
Total	14617.000	13			
Corrected Total	327.692	12			

a. R Squared = .211 (Adjusted R Squared = .054)

Table 5 shows a one-way ANCOVA on male and female participants' outcome after being exposed to modelling. The table shows that, there is no significant difference in the

responses to Modelling Counselling Technique of male and female secondary school students, who experienced tertiary institution transition concerns in Ilorin metropolis { $F(1,10) = 1.27, p = .285 > .05$ }; hence, the hypothesis which stated that male and female participants exposed to Modelling Counselling Technique are not significantly different in their responses to treatment is retained. This means that, the effect of the modelling counselling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns of male and female participants is the same. Therefore, gender has no influence on the respondents' responses to the treatment.

The main finding of the study revealed that, there is a significant effect of social skills training on tertiary institution transition concerns among senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. This means that participants that were exposed to social skills training showed less concerns or fears towards transition to tertiary institutions of learning compared to those in the control group who were not exposed to any counselling intervention. The finding of this study is in line with the finding of Weisberg et al., (2016) Vila, Gila-Corbi and Pozo-Rico (2021) which revealed that, social skills training brought about positive change in students' various associated concerns related to institutional transition, by exhibiting less anxiety after counselling intervention. This also corroborates the cognitive behaviour theory which states that social skills training helps in improving the client's functionality in social and performance situations, which in turn could also lead to other positive outcomes such as, students' successful transition to tertiary institutions from high school (Bieling, McCabe, and Antony, 2006). This current finding correlates with the previous study, perhaps, this could be simply because the two studies were conducted among students of the same age group.

The second finding of this study revealed that there is significant effect of modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns among senior secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. This implies that, the participants who went through the modelling training exercise reported positive changes in their fears towards institution transition from high school. The finding of this study is consistent with the finding of Sari, 2020; Etiawan and Andriani (2020) which established that modelling counselling intervention alleviates institution transition fears among high school students. This finding supports Hesse (2015), whose finding affirmed that, a behaviour modelling could help increasing students' belief about themselves and what is possible thus, enhancing the students' ability to accomplish the task set forth. Adolescents tend to emulate behaviours observed from people considered important figures (such as parents, teachers, elderly and people at the realm of power) in the society (Eyisi, 2016). Hence, their positive response towards modelling exercise to alleviate fear against institution transition concerns. This finding is an indication that, a well-implemented modelling technique treatment can reduce students' tertiary institution transition concerns; thus, the finding is in compliance with the previous studies.

The third finding of this study revealed that there is a significant differential effect of social skills training and modelling technique on tertiary institution transition concerns among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. The differential change is in favour of the social skills training. This suggested that social skill training is more effective on tertiary

institution transition concerns than the modelling counselling technique used on the participants. This outcome perhaps, could be as a result of the fact that social skills training counselling intervention is embedded with several life enhancing skills that could bring about quality of life in an individual. This finding therefore, is in contrast with the previous study of Wlalo, Schroeder-Hartwig, Hand, Kaiser and Munchau (1990) whose result revealed no differential effect between social skills training and exposure in-vivo technique on students' social phobia and other related school concerns. The variation observed in this finding from the previous study might have resulted from the facts that, the locales in which the two studies were conducted are different from each other, and the participants involved in the two studies were of different age groups.

The fourth hypothesis of this study revealed that there is no significant difference in the responses to social skills training (SST) of male and female secondary school students who experienced tertiary institution transition concerns in Ilorin metropolis. This means that, both male and female participants who experienced tertiary institution transition concerns that were exposed to social skills training responded in almost similar manner to treatment. The current finding is consistent with the finding of Harrison (2016) whose study reported that every participant regardless of his or her gender that was exposed to social skills training intervention experiences similar change to the treatment. Hence, this finding suggests further that, social skills training works in almost similar way for both male and female students that experienced concerns on transition to tertiary institutions of learning. This finding is in support of the previous finding could be based on the fact that the two studies used participants whose educational experiences are similar to each other and secondly, they were of the same age bracket with each other.

The hypothesis five tested in this study indicated that there is no significant difference in the responses to modelling counselling technique of male and female secondary school students who experienced tertiary institution transition concerns in Ilorin metropolis. This means that both male and female participants exposed to modelling counselling intervention responded in almost the same manner to treatment intervention. The finding of this study concurs with the result of the study of Raedts (2017) which revealed that no significant difference exists in the male and female participants' responses to video modelling intervention on motivation for learning.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that a problem-solving oriented group approach of social skills training and modelling counselling technique are effective in reducing concerns associated with transition to tertiary institutions among secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. Differential effect occurred between the two counselling interventions used (that is, SST and modelling) in favour of social skills training. Also, there is no gender difference in the participants post-test results of the two counselling techniques adopted for this study. Thus, a well implemented problem-solving oriented group approach can be relied upon as an effective counselling intervention for addressing problems related to students' transition from secondary school to tertiary institutions of learning.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among other that school counsellors among others that: School Counsellors should make effective use of problems solving oriented group approach using social skills training and modelling to assist students who are experiencing problems that are related to transition from secondary to tertiary institutions.

The School Counsellors should also ensure that both male and female students are given equal opportunities in terms of provision of counselling services. Intervention Programmes involving a problem solving oriented group approach using social skills training and modelling should not be less than six weeks in order to obtain optimal results.

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APPENDIX

Treatment Procedure

A week prior to the commencement of the treatment intervention programme the researchers went to the selected schools to seek for the approval of the authority concerned. After gotten the approval of the school authorities, the researchers sought to create a warm rapport with the school counsellors, the teachers and the students who are

the direct audience. The researchers administered pre-test to the students and used the result to select the participants for the study. They also used the occasion to inform the participants about the intervention programme and finally assigned identification numbers to each of the participants for easy identification and for the sake of confidentiality and later fixed dates and times for the intervention programme. The intervention programme for the two experimental groups and control group lasted for a period of six weeks, which spread thus; one week for pre-test administration and familiarization, four week for treatment proper and one week for post-test administration and termination of group session.

A. Social Skills Training Template (SST)

NO	General Category	Activities
1	Non-verbal communication	Eye contact; Body language and Facial expressions
2	Communication skills	Tone and volume of speech; Strategies for beginning and ending conversation; and Asking open-ended rather than closed-ended questions
3	Presentation of skills	Refraining from reading a presentation to an audience; Developing effective slides and audiovisual aids; Using humour in the presentation; and Strategies for answering audience questions without seeming defensive
4	Relationship skills	Asking another individual for lunch or dinner; and Strategies for following up after a date
5	Assertiveness skills	Asking for something in a direct manner, without coming across as overly passive or aggressive; Asking another individual to change his or her behaviour; and Refusing an unreasonable request
7	Listening skills	Listening to other people instead of planning what one is going to say next in a conversation; and Asking for clarification when a statement is unclear

Adapted from Bieling, McCabe and Antony (2006)

B. Modelling Counselling Technique Template (MCTT)

NO	Feared situation	Practices
1	Casual conversation and small talk	Say hello or ask directions from a stranger (for example, on a queue, on the walkway, on the sidewalk); and join an ongoing conversations (such as on orientation or matriculation programme) in university environment
2	Meeting new people	Join a club; Take a course; and Attend an event
3	Public speaking	Take a public speaking programme; Take a course that involves presentations; and Speak in meetings and in group discussion
4	Eating or drinking in front of others	Have lunch with colleagues; Eat in a food court at the mall; and Eat a snack while walking around departments
5	Writing in front of others	Complete a contest ballot at a store; Write a letter, while sitting in a coffee shop; and Pay for an item by check
6	Being the center of attention	Drop keys in a public place; Shout out name of colleagues or friend from across the departments; and Spill water in a restaurant or cafeteria
7	Conflict or assertiveness situations	Return food in a restaurant; Say "no" in response to an unreasonable request; and Ask someone to change his or her unacceptable behaviour towards you

Adapted from Bieling, McCabe and Antony (2006)