

Evaluation of Counseling Effectiveness on Students Study Habit Differentials and Academic Achievements

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Abstract

Students' performance in English Language as a result of counseling on techniques of effective study was investigated. 80 students (40 boys and 40 girls) randomly selected in each of two mixed schools were used for the study. In both experimental and control groups, concept knowledge test and study habit problem inventory were the pre-treatment measures used to establish equivalence of the two groups, while the concept Achievement test, based on the English Language concepts taught, was administered at the end of the experiment to both groups to assess the effects of the counseling on students' performance in the subject. The results revealed the counseled students performed significantly better than uncounseled students ($t=3.62$, $df 88$, $p<.01$).

Keywords: Counseling; Study Habit; Academic Achievements

Introduction

The differences in student's academic performance in school cannot be attributed to differences in mental ability alone. Often, students who do not differ in intellectual ability and who come from similar socio-economic groups show marked differences in academic performance. Among other factors, there is enough evidence to show that poor study habits contribute substantially to students' low academic out-put in school. Onyejiaku [1] observed that three major factors influence students' academic achievement, namely intelligence and special abilities (50–60%), effective study habits (33–45%), environmental factors and chance (12–30%). Of these factors, the school can effectively control study habits of students. In this, the services of school counselors should prove very helpful.

The effectiveness of counseling services on several dimensions of students' life has been investigated. These include group therapy with students in academic difficulty [2], absentee high school sophomores (Jane, 1995), study habits modification [3], achievement motivation and performance [4,5], vocational choice [6] and group counseling and performance [7–10]. Almost in all these investigations counseling services revealed remarkable improvement in students' academic performance and behavior.

Surprisingly, the effectiveness of counseling students on study habits has not been given the attention it deserves as empirical studies on it have not been widely reported in literature. In order to fill this gap, at least in part, this study was designed to investigate experimentally the effects of study habit differentials on students' performance on the basic assumption that students who are counseled would perform significantly higher in English Language than students who are not counseled on habits of study.

Methodology

Senior Secondary 1 students in two mixed schools were chosen for this study. In school A (experimental group), there were two stream of 35 boys and 46 girls with ages ranging from 13.25 to 15.84 years. In school B (control group) there were three stream comprising 58 boys and 64 girls with ages ranging from 13.32 to 15.96 years.

For purposes of selection of subjects for the study and to ensure equivalence of the groups with regard to the English Language concepts for the experiment, the concept knowledge Test was administered personally the experimenter in the two schools. This test was a pre-test measure to determine the students prior knowledge of the selected English language concept for the statistical significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The researcher therefore randomly selected 40 students in school A (20 boys, mean age=15.23 years, Sd=2.66 and 20 girls, mean age=15.18 years, Sd=2.58) for the experimental group and 40 students (20 boys mean age=15.25 years, Sd=2.66 and 20 girls: mean age=15.12, Sd=2.49) for the control group.

Study Problem Inventory

The Study Problem Inventory consisted of number of items selected from the Minnesota Study habit Blank and Techniques of Effective study [1]. The instrument was divided into five sections with a total of 60 items. The first section dealt with problems of concentration, the second section dealt with conditions for effective learning and retention, section three concentrated on the causes of poor performance, section four dealt with note-taking, time scheduling and distribution of practice, and section five dealt with revision and the taking of examinations. For face, construct and content validities of the instrument, the items were edited by some psychologists, test and measurement specialists and some classroom teachers. Suggestions for improvement were taken care of in the final draft.

The instrument was pilot-tested using 80 secondary school students in a mixed school. After 10 days, the instrument was readministered

to the same group of students (37 boys and 43 girls) with test-retest reliability co-efficient of.83.

The instrument was administered to the students in both schools before assigning them to experimental and control groups. The aim was to assess the pattern of their study habits. The analysis of the data revealed that generally the students had very poor and ineffective study habits.

The content Achievement test was the post-test measure used to assess the performance of students in both experimental and control groups and thereby determine the effects of counseling given to the former group on study habits. The test measure was based on the same English Language lessons taught to both groups and administered at the end of the experiment which lasted for five weeks, 50 minutes a period, twice a week

Counseling

Students in the experimental group were counseled on effective study habits with emphasis on each of the five areas, namely, problems of concentration, conditions for effective learning and retention, causes of poor performance, note-taking, time scheduling and distribution of practice, and revision and the taking of the

examinations. The control group, on the other hand, received no form of counseling on any of these areas. The students in the experimental group were divided into three sub-groups of not less than 13 and not more than 14 students in each group for purposes of counseling.

Instructional Materials

The Instructional materials were several English Language concepts taught to both experimental and control groups by the researcher under similar teaching-learning conditions, The concepts were parts of speech, phrases, clauses and sentences, tenses and number.

For both groups, lesson presentation, the type of examples during teaching and exercises at the end of each lesson were the same. Individualized instruction or attention was as much as possible avoided in order to minimize differential treatment. All questions were discussed and answered openly.

Results

The post-test mean scores serves as the criterion and simple t-test were computed to determine their significance. All the statistical analyses were based on 0.05 significance level.

Groups	Counseled Students (experimental group)			Uncounseled Students (control group)		
	N	X	SD	N	X	SD
Boys	20	63.1	8.33	20	58.36	6.41
Girls	20	65.6	6.17	20	59.36	5.94
Entire Class	40	64.4	6.41	40	58.86	6.5

Table 1: Mean scores and Standard Deviations of Content Achievement of Counseled and uncounseled Students.

Groups	N	X	SD	Groups compared Df t-value		
Counseled Students						
Entire Class i	40	64.35	1.01	i Vs iv	78	3.64***
Boys ii	20	63.14	1.86	ii Vs iii	38	1.04
Girls iii	20	65.56	1.38	ii Vs v	38	2.03*
Uncounseled Students						
Entire Class i	40	58.86	1.42	ii Vs vi	38	1.65
Boys v	20	58.36	1.43	iii Vs v	38	3.62**
Girls vi	20	59.36	1.33	iii Vs vi	38	3.23**
				v Vs vi	38	0.51

Table 2: Test of Significance on Content Achievement of Counseled and uncounseled students.

SE - Standard Error

P<.05

** P<.01

Before the treatment started, it was necessary to establish equivalence between the experimental and control groups. As already indicated, content knowledge test was administered to measure the subject's entry behavior while study Habit Problem Inventory was administered to assess the pattern of students study habits. The

statistical analysis of these pre-treatment measures revealed no significant differences between the two groups. This means that any post-test significant differences observed should be due to treatment effects (Counseling on effective study habits).

The results of the analysis of the post-test scores on the content achievement of both groups are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

There were remarkable differences in the mean scores between the two groups. The mean scores and standard deviation of content achievement of students who were counseled (experimental group) and those who were not counseled (control group) are presented in Table 1.

Tests of significance (Table 2) reveals four significant differences. The students who were counseled on effective habits of study performed significantly better in English Language than students who received the same form of teaching but were not counseled on study habits ($t=3.65$, $df=78$, $p<.01$). Girls who were counseled performed significantly better than their uncounseled counterparts in the control group ($t=3.62$, $df=38$, $p<.01$). Similarly boys who were counseled performed significantly better than their uncounseled counterparts in the control group ($t=2.03$, $df=38$, $p<.05$). Furthermore girls who were counseled performed significantly better than boys in the control group ($t=3.23$, $df=38$, $p<.01$).

Though the performance of students who received counseling on study habits and those who received no counseling was in the predicted direction, no significant difference was found between boys who received counseling and girls who were not counseled.

From the findings of this study, four main conclusions are drawn.

Students who receive counseling on the techniques of effective study perform significantly better in English Language than students who are not exposed to similar counseling.

Girls who receive counseling on techniques of effective study habits perform better than both boys and girls who do not receive such counseling.

When boys and girls are counseled together on effective study habits, their performance in English Language does not show much difference.

Boys who receive counseling on effective study habits do not perform remarkably better in English language than girls who do not receive such counseling.

Discussion

The first conclusion implies that a class of students counseled on effective habits of study performs remarkably better in English Language than students who receive no similar counseling in order to adduce possible reasons for this phenomenon; one could examine students approach to their studies. In most of our schools at all levels, elementary, secondary and higher institutions, effective methods of study are rarely emphasized. This is unfortunate Onyejiaku [1] rightly remarked that "whenever a student adopts effective study techniques, his learning skills, his understanding of learnt materials and his memory processing strategies as well as his general performance in both tests and examinations are improved appreciably".

Students who are counseled on effective study habits tend to improve on their power of concentration, read with greater understanding, spread their time of study evenly and take meaningful

notes. All these have positive effects on performance. In the light of this, the remarkable superiority of counseled students over their uncounseled counterparts is not surprising. Just like any other life activity, for study to be effective, definite technique must be learnt and applied. This helps memory functioning.

The second conclusion indicates that girls who receive counseling on effective study habits perform better than both girls and boys who receive no counseling This could be explained in terms of effects of training on the one hand and on the other hand, the differential strengths of girls and boys in verbal and spatial abilities respectively. As already pointed out, students exposed to effective study habits approach their studies more intelligently, more confidently and more meaningfully than students who have no opportunity of such training. Furthermore, girls naturally do better in verbal activities required in English Language than boys who have greater spatial ability When the natural aptitude of girls is guided through training in effective habits of study, there is every likelihood that they should perform significantly better than boys who have double disadvantage of not being exposed to techniques of effective study as well as not being gifted in verbal ability as their female counterparts.

The lack of significant difference in English Language performance between boys and girls who received counseling on effective study habits is a little surprising because it is expected that girls who naturally have a flair for language should perform significantly better than boys. One possible reason for these curious findings may be explained in terms of students' attitude toward certain school subjects and stereotyping. In schools, there is an intuitive feeling, if not a common assumption, that English Language is a female subject while mathematics is a male subject. These stereotyped opinions tend to influence boys and girls attitude toward the study of these subjects. While most boys pay little attention to language lessons, most girls on the other hand pay less attention to mathematics lessons. But, when both of these sexes are exposed to techniques of effective study and guided to apply them, the wide performance differentials in these subjects may be narrowed appreciably.

The findings of this study have great implications for students, teachers and counselors. Most students desire to make good grades and to pass at the proper time. In order to realize these dreams, students must know that success in school work depends to some extent on application of effective study skills which are acquired by conscious practice. Similarly, teachers should know that teaching the subject matter is not enough for students to master the learning material. Students need to be guided on how to study effectively. Counselors should set up small counseling groups of students to discuss effective study techniques. It is expected that knowledge of effective habits of study would increase students' confidence in school work, minimize test anxiety and improve academic performance remarkably.

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