

EFFECTIVENESS OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY IN REDUCING ETHNIC INTOLERANCE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN WUKARI EDUCATION ZONE, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in reducing ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria. Five (5) null hypotheses were raised in line with the objectives which guided the study. A quasi-experimental design of pretest-posttest was used. The population of the study comprised of 1,514 SS 1 students and a total of 20 students were selected using purposive sampling. The instrument used for data collection was the Ethnic Intolerance Questionnaire (EIQ) with a reliability index of 0.83. Paired samples t-test was used to test hypotheses H₀₁, H₀₂, H₀₃ & H₀₄, while independent samples t-test was used to test hypothesis H₀₅ at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study showed that REBT had a significant effectiveness in reducing cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance. However, there was no significant gender difference in the effectiveness of REBT in reducing ethnic intolerance. The study concluded that REBT is an effective intervention for reducing ethnic intolerance among adolescents. The study recommended among others that professional counsellors should be trained in the utilization of cognitive restructuring as a technique of REBT in order to help modify cognitive distortions associated with ethnic intolerance.

Keywords: Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT); Ethnic intolerance; Effectiveness; Adolescents

Introduction

The problem of ethnic intolerance has become worrisome and a topic of concern all over the globe. This problem which has led to devastating consequences such as loss of lives and destruction of properties should not be taken lightly. Aimaganbetova et al. (2023) defined ethnic intolerance as a lack of tolerance for different ethnicities as well as a lack of understanding of cultural differences and historical events. This form of intolerance can be referred to as the unwillingness to respect views, beliefs, or behaviours that differ from one's own, particularly concerning a person's ethnic identity. Ethnic intolerance is rooted in the refusal to accept and respect the diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, often leading to social conflict and tension (Reuter, 2023). It manifests in various forms, such as prejudice, hostility, and discrimination towards individuals or groups based on their ethnicity. This can include acts of violence, organized discrimination, and the perpetration of negative stereotypes against specific ethnic groups (Ahmed, 2019; Paul, 2024).

Onimhawo as cited in Momoh and Okecha (2001) asserted that when it comes to the topic of ethnic intolerance, many parents have failed in the primary role of inculcating moral values, educating and helping their children to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Since parents have neglected their duty as good models, hatred and contempt has been transferred to the younger generations who have no idea of the root cause of these conflicts. This therefore, has drawn adolescents

into cycles of unending conflicts, thereby rendering the society uninhabitable.

The people of Wukari Education Zone could have a tendency for deep-rooted anger, hatred and suspicion which are products of ethnic conflicts. Hatred and suspicion are often responsible for the violence in the society. It is therefore with this in mind that the researcher is undertaking this study in order to find a long-lasting solution to the problem of ethnic intolerance which has plagued the region. It has been observed by the researcher that in Wukari Education Zone, adolescents and young people were not instilled with the spirit of ethnic tolerance while they were growing up. This therefore has made these young people to become intolerant and manifest all manner of intolerant behaviours.

The emotional dimension of ethnic intolerance may manifest as heightened negative emotions towards individuals from different backgrounds. Negative emotions such as fear, anger, resentment, and entitlement stemming from perceived threats to cultural norms or values, can intensify intergroup conflicts and impede cross-cultural understanding thereby leading to divisions and discord within the community. Furthermore, the psychology of intolerance suggests that emotional reactions, worldview defense, and self-regulation ability play a role in the development of intolerance (American Psychological Association, 2015). The behavioural dimensions of intolerance refer to the actions which intolerant individuals exhibit. These behavioural expressions of intolerance, range from exclusionary practices to overt aggression i.e., verbal insults, physical fights, mutilation in any form of the different religious holy books (Raji et al., 2015). According to Efeurhobo and Fredrick (2021), these horrible acts have led to cycles of tension and mistrust, thereby, impeding the development of a cohesive and peaceful society.

The search for ethnic tolerance in Wukari Education Zone has become pressing and a thing of concern among both adults and adolescents. Previous efforts towards solving the problem of intolerance have been demonstrably poor and have not yielded any meaningful result as evident in the continuous numbers of ethnic conflicts that are on the rise. It has therefore become necessary to look for a better way to handle the problem. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) seems to be the best intervention to manage this menace. REBT is a form of cognitive-behavioural therapy that focuses on identifying and changing irrational beliefs that may lead to emotional and behavioural problems (Turner, 2016). Research has shown that irrational beliefs can lead to negative emotions and various psychological distress (Vincenzo et al., 2020).

REBT is based on the principle that the thoughts which human beings harbour leads to the behaviour which they exhibit. In a group session where REBT is utilized, a series of activities such as identifying, disputing and modifying irrational beliefs and thoughts which leads to unwanted emotions and behaviours are maximized in helping to solve behavioural problems which people exhibit. Through the use of REBT techniques, such as disputation and cognitive restructuring, counsellors can teach adolescents to identify and challenge irrational beliefs about individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. This can help them adopt more positive attitudes and behaviours towards diversity and in the process, promote tolerance and acceptance of others.

Previous studies have reported that REBT as a counselling/psychological intervention has been applied in the treatment of bullying, aggression, anger, irrational thoughts and beliefs, intolerant behaviours and other behavioural problems. Paolini et al., as cited in Birtel and Crisp (2015) indicated that negative thoughts, feelings and beliefs are the basis for prejudice toward all manner of groups in societies across the world and that appropriate interventions that address this problem should be developed. Since the problem of intolerance is psychological in nature, it is imperative to use a psychological mechanism to help mitigate or solve this issue once and for all. Against this backdrop,

this study emerged with the aim of exploring the effectiveness of REBT as an intervention to ameliorate cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

People of different ethnic backgrounds live and interact with one another in Wukari Education Zone. They are expected to harmoniously live and foster unity among themselves. Unfortunately, not all the people from these ethnic groups relate in harmony with one another. This leads to ethnic intolerance resulting in conflicts which are passed down from parents to their children thereby influencing and fostering contempt and hate into innocent children. Previous efforts and strategies in solving ethnic crises as consequences of ethnic intolerance within Nigeria in the past has been limited to mainly inter-ethnic dialogue, seminars, workshops and condemnation of the causes that gave rise to these conflicts. The strategies used in the past have failed to address the problem of ethnic violence amongst the cultural communities nor yield any meaningful results. Therefore, it is necessary to seek other reliable means of solving the problem. It was with this in mind that the researchers wanted to find out whether REBT would be the most effective intervention that could address the problem.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on ethnic intolerance among adolescents. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to find out the:

1. Effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.
2. Effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.
3. Effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.
4. Effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.
5. The gender difference in the effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H0₁: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

H0₂: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

H0₃: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education, Taraba State, Nigeria.

H0₄: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

H0₅: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant gender difference in its effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design. The premise behind the selection of the design was based on the fact that it has the advantage of testing the results obtained from the post-test in order to analyze the effectiveness or otherwise of the treatment when compared with the pre-

test results. The area of the study was Wukari Education Zone which is located in the Southern part of Taraba State, Nigeria. The zone comprises of two Local Government Areas i.e., Ibi and Wukari LGAs. The population of the study comprised of 1,514 SS 1 students of public secondary schools in Wukari Education Zone. The sample for this study was 20 students selected using purposive sampling. The instrument used to collect data for this study at the pre-test and post-test level is titled “Ethnic Intolerance Questionnaire” (EIQ). The instrument was validated by experts in the field of counselling, psychology and, measurement and evaluation from the Faculty of Education, Taraba State University, Jalingo. The reliability of this instrument was obtained through a pilot test conducted using test-retest method. The results of the pilot test were calculated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. Hence, the instrument was considered reliable for data collection.

The researchers adopted a three-phase method in order to conduct the study. The first phase which was the pre-treatment phase involved administering the EIQ to the subjects in order to determine the baseline for the selection of the participants. The second phase was the treatment phase. At this phase, the researchers utilized the techniques of REBT in order to handle the problems of ethnic intolerance exhibited by the subjects during the pre-test. Techniques such as disputation, cognitive restructuring, systematic desensitization and modelling were used in helping the participants to adjust and acquire new behaviour patterns. The treatment phase took place during normal school hours and lasted for the period of eight weeks where two sessions which lasted 30 minutes were conducted weekly. The last phase which was the post-treatment phase was done by re-administering the instrument to the subjects in order to determine if the treatment was effective or not.

The method used to analyze the data collected was inferential statistics of t-test to test the null hypotheses. Paired samples t-test was used to test hypotheses H_{01} , H_{02} , H_{03} and H_{04} while independent samples t-test was used to test H_{05} . All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The rationale behind the selection of t-test as the statistical tool is because it is often used in hypothesis testing to determine whether a process or treatment actually has an effect on the population of interest, or whether two groups are different from one another (Bevans, 2023).

Results

Hypothesis 1: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education, Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Paired Samples t-test on the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Cognitive Dimensions of Ethnic Intolerance among Adolescents.

Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig (p)
Ethnic Intolerance scores	Pretest	20	17.950	2.235	19	13.183	.000
	Posttest	20	10.450	1.904			

P < 0.05, t computed > 1.96 at df 19

Results of the Paired sample t-test statistics in table 1 showed that rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) has significant effectiveness on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance ($t = 13.183$, $p = 0.000$). The t-calculated value of 13.183 is significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level (df 19). This indicates a strong statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in the change of ethnic intolerance scores before and after the REBT intervention. The results shows that the REBT intervention had a substantial impact on reducing ethnic intolerance among the adolescents, as

evidenced by the significant decrease in ethnic intolerance scores post-intervention. This implies that REBT was effective in addressing cognitive dimensions related to ethnic intolerance in the study participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Paired Samples t-test on the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Emotional Dimensions of Ethnic Intolerance among Adolescents.

Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	Sig (p)
Ethnic Intolerance scores	Pretest	20	16.800	2.764	19	10.801	.000
	Posttest	20	10.600	1.729			

P < 0.05, t computed > 1.96 at df 19

Results of the Paired sample t-test statistics in table 2 above showed that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance ($t = 10.801, p = 0.000$). The t-calculated value of 10.801 is significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level (df 19). This indicates a strong statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in the change of ethnic intolerance scores before and after the REBT intervention. The results indicates that the REBT intervention had a significant impact on reducing ethnic intolerance among participants of the study, as evidenced by the significant decrease in ethnic intolerance scores post-intervention. This implies that REBT was effective in addressing emotional dimensions related to ethnic intolerance among the participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Paired Samples t-test on the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Behavioural Dimensions of Ethnic Intolerance among Adolescents.

Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	Sig (p)
Ethnic Intolerance scores	Pretest	20	17.000	2.790	19	8.553	.000
	Posttest	20	11.250	2.149			

P < 0.05, t computed > 1.96 at df 19

Results of the Paired sample t-test statistics in table 3 showed that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance ($t = 8.553, p = 0.000$). The t-calculated value of 8.553 is significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level (df 19). This indicates a strong statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in the change of ethnic intolerance scores before and after the REBT intervention. The results suggest that the REBT intervention had a substantial impact on reducing ethnic intolerance among the adolescents, as evidenced by the significant decrease in ethnic intolerance scores post-intervention. This implies that REBT was effective in addressing behavioural dimensions related to ethnic intolerance in the participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on behavioural dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Paired Samples t-test on the Effect of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy on Ethnic Intolerance among Adolescents.

Variable	Test	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig (p)
Ethnic Intolerance scores	Pretest	20	51.950	4.904	19	20.062	.000
	Posttest	20	32.300	4.168			

P < 0.05, t computed > 1.96 at df 19

Results of the Paired samples t-test statistics in table 4 showed that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on ethnic intolerance ($t = 20.062, p = 0.000$). The t-calculated value of 20.062 is significantly higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level (df 19). This indicates a strong statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) in the change of ethnic intolerance scores before and after the REBT intervention. The results shows that REBT intervention had a significant impact on reducing ethnic intolerance among the adolescents, as evidenced by the significant decrease in ethnic intolerance scores post-intervention. This implies that REBT was effective in addressing ethnic intolerance of the participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents is rejected.

Hypothesis 5: Rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant gender difference on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Wukari Education Zone, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test on Gender Difference in the Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy in Reducing Ethnic Intolerance among Adolescents.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	Sig (p)
Religious Intolerance scores	Male	10	32.700	4.620	18	.420	.680
	Female	10	31.900	3.871			

P > 0.05, t computed > 1.96 at df 18

The result of the above independent samples t-test statistics in table 5 shows that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant gender difference in its effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents in Taraba State. The outcome of the t-test shows that the p value of .680 is higher than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the calculated t value of .420 is lower than the t critical value of 1.96 ($P > 0.05; t < 1.96$) at 18 df implying that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no gender difference in the treatment of ethnic intolerance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant gender difference in its effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents is accepted and retained.

Discussion

The result of the analysis in table 1 indicates that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on cognitive dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents. The effectiveness of the technique could be because of the REBT package which was designed to contain techniques of cognitive restructuring.

The result yielded by the analysis data in table 2 shows that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on emotional dimensions of ethnic intolerance among adolescents. The reduction in intolerant feelings such as anger and anxiety could be because REBT utilizes emotional regulation techniques. The finding of this study therefore supports Ellis' claim that REBT produces

better results when it is applied to solve a client's emotional and behaviour problems.

The finding shown on table 4 signifies that rational emotive behaviour therapy has significant effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents. This finding is in line with previous studies (Ekechukwu, 2018; Eseadi et al., 2020; Johnson & Patrick, 2019; Odaro & Bello, 2020; Yahaya & Ma'aruf, 2014) who found out that REBT is an effective counselling tool that can be utilized in treating behavioural problems such as anxiety, anger, aggression and bullying which adolescents exhibit in the environment. Behavioural problems need to be dealt with in order for an individual and his/her immediate environment to experience peace and total happiness.

The result of the finding as shown on table 5 indicates that rational emotive behaviour therapy has no significant gender difference in its effectiveness on ethnic intolerance among adolescents. This study which investigated the effectiveness of rational emotive behaviour therapy in reducing ethnic intolerance among adolescents has several implications.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) is an effective intervention for reducing ethnic intolerance among adolescents. The study found that REBT significantly reduced levels of intolerance as measured by the Ethnic Intolerance Questionnaire (EIQ). The findings therefore, indicate that REBT can be a valuable tool for promoting tolerance and reducing prejudice among adolescents.

Recommendations

The researchers based on the findings recommend the following:

1. Professional counsellors should be trained in the utilization of cognitive restructuring as a technique of rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) in order to help modify cognitive distortions associated with ethnic intolerance.
2. The government should collaborate with stakeholders in order to organize workshops that will equip psychologists and counsellors with emotional regulation techniques to manage negative emotions triggered by intergroup encounters.
3. Educational programmes which encourage intergroup contact among adolescents should be set up in various communities in order to admit and help participants with opportunities to challenge their biases and prejudice.
4. Counsellors, psychologists and teachers should be properly trained in the effective utilization of REBT to address ethnic intolerance.
5. Male and female adolescents who exhibit ethnic intolerance should be exposed to the treatment of REBT.

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