EFFECTS OF RATIONAL-EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY ON MATE SELECTION PREFERENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY KASHERE, GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
High rate of marriage divorce is a current trend in the Nigerian society today. Several reasons have been attributed to this unacceptable trend in Nigeria, but, perhaps a major factor could be non-adherence to traditional mate selection patterns. This has negative implications on the families and by extension, the nation at large. In an attempt to reduce this problem to a minimum level, the researcher investigated the effects of Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in Federal University Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria. The design adopted for the study was the true experimental research design, that is pretest-posttest control and experimental design. A sample of 40 undergraduate students was purposively selected for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the Student Mate Selection Preferences Questionnaire (SMSPQ). The validity and reliability of the instrument was established. Three research questions were raised to guide the study, and two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the analysis showed that REBT had a significant effect on mate selection preferences of the undergraduate students. Conclusion was made, and it was recommended among others that REBT principles should be applied in changing negative behaviours and irrational beliefs/decisions on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students.

KEYWORDS: Effects of REBT, Mate selection, Preferences, Personality attributes, Parental influence

INTRODUCTION
Marriage is cardinal in any cultural group in view of its importance in sustaining the society. Marriage is a universal concept but its process varies from one society to another and
from culture to culture. Marriage is a union of two spouses of the opposite sex (Vongdip, 2000), that ensure the survival of the human species. In Nigeria today, the marriage institution is under threat because of the high rate of divorce for several reasons attributed to it, but, perhaps a major factor could be non-adherence to traditional mate selection patterns. Mate selection is a process of selecting a life marriage partner. It remains one of the most crucial decisions intending couples have to make in their lifetimes. Similarly, researchers such as Fisman, Inyengar, Kamenica and Simonson (2006) posited that the choice of a marriage partner is one of the most serious decisions people face.

Generally, mate selection forms the foundation upon which a family emerged or is built. Mate selection when is carefully and properly done usually gives satisfaction, fulfilment and happiness in marital life, especially to those who made rational and informed-decision on mate selection preferences. Irrational decision on mate selection usually leads to marital disharmony. In the African society, mate selection is not simply a decision of a young man and woman but significant members of the two families are involved as well. The most common mate selection in African society, Nigeria inclusive, has been by arrangement. In this method, according to Ingoldsby and Smith (2006), marriage is arranged before puberty and can be worked out before the child is born. Among Nigerian ethnic groups, this method shows the social importance of marriage and saves the children unnecessary worry of having to make decisions for themselves on mate selection. Here, potential couples have no role to play in mate selection process or have the opportunity to think and take rational decision about who a life partner would be.

Another method of mate selection in Nigeria is one that allows potential couples to make their choice and inform their parents and relatives who can then start the negotiation and arrangement for marriage. Here, parents are not involved in the decision of mate choice. This is a significant shift from arranged marriage where free-choice of mate selection allows potential couples themselves, rather than their parents or others to make the decision for them. This shift from arranged marriage to free-choice can be attributed to the exposure of the Nigerian society to new ways of life, modern education, new expectations, new ideas, migration of people from one part of the world to another and increasing western cultural influence. Modupe (2008) observed that these new ways of life have almost changed the traditional patterns or practices of choosing mates and arranging marriages in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, mate selection has become a serious concern because youths are confused and afraid to get into relationships that could lead to marriage. This claim justifies the need for counselling intervention to prevent further occurrences. The problem of divorce may also appear to be global as Alayi, Alahdad and Shafeq (2013) reported a similar situation that Muslim couples get divorced every fifteen minutes in Malaysia. The researchers revealed that,
there were 27,116 divorces in 2009, as against 17,749 in 2005 divorces which makes about 82% of total divorces in Malaysia. Alayi et al. found that most of these failed marriages were due to irrational decisions from the initial stage of the relationships. Perhaps, many marital squabbles that occur in homes may not be unconnected with the patterns of mate selection practices in Nigeria.

There have been many suggestions on how to manage the cases of divorce in any society. One of such is through Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis in 1950s. It is a cognitive behavioural therapy that seeks to change maladaptive behaviours by confronting and disputing irrational beliefs that are perceived as being the root of maladaptive behaviours (Ntamu, 2017). The therapy deals with behaviour that proceed from wrong values and poor socialization, and it is a therapy for solving emotional problems. Counselling psychologists use the therapy as a technique to help students maximize their faculty of reasoning and encourage them to assume responsibility for their own lives. Rational-emotive behaviour therapy could also assist students to become self-interested and self-directing to overcome irrational decisions on mate selection preferences. However, the focus of this study is to investigate the effects of REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in relation to personality attributes, and parental influence. Perhaps, a positive effect of REBT could solve a lot of problems by improving the quality of mate selection and sustainable marriage.

Personality is an important component of mate selection preferences. Researchers such as Yahaya, Esere, Ogunsanmi and Oniye (2015) opined that people select mates whose personality traits are complementary to their own. That a potential husband or wife who has poor understanding of his/her mate’s personality characteristics such as: beliefs, interest, attitude to life, character, temperament, level of aggressiveness, assertiveness or shyness and ambitions may have problem in their future marital home. The understanding of personality characteristics by the prospective couples would promote effective and efficient marital relationship.

Parental influence is an important factor in mate selection behaviour. In Nigeria, parents play a major role in choosing marriage partners for their children just as is prevalent in many developing countries (Maliki, 2009). This attests to irrational decision patterns people usually make on mate selection that can lead to a dysfunctional family and potential problems to potential marriage groups like undergraduates.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The marriage institution is under threat because of the high rate of divorce in Nigeria. There is no significant improvement that the current methods employed by counsellors and
other stakeholders/professionals in solving pre-marital related problems are sufficient. This is because the problem persists in the marriage institution perhaps because the methods employed so far have been more of curative than preventive. This study used a preventive method to establish the effectiveness of emotional technique that could assist potential couples. Previous studies have revealed that efforts had been focused on determining the factors influencing mate selection process, or identifying differences in mate selection criteria in human choice. The problem of this study, therefore, was to establish the effectiveness of rational-emotive behaviour therapy in enhancing mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in the study area and Nigeria at large.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of rational-emotive behaviour therapy (REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in Federal University Kashere Gombe State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. determine the effects of REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in relation to personality attribute preferences in Federal University of Kashere.
2. establish the effects of REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in relation to parental influence preferences in Federal University of Kashere.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students who were exposed to treatment in relation to personality attributes?
2. What is the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students who were exposed to treatment in relation to parental influence?

**HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between mate selection preference mean scores of experimental and control groups based on personality attributes after the treatment.
2. There is no significant difference between mate selection preference mean scores of experimental and control groups according to parental influence after the treatment.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

A true experimental research design was adopted, and the type employed for this study was the pretest-posttest control and experimental group design. Both experimental and control groups were pretested. The treatment was administered to experimental group, while the control group was not exposed to treatment, instead the control group was taught with topics
that were not linked with mate selection preferences. The main aim of this design was to compare the gained scores of the two groups after exposure to treatment.

The population for the study consisted of all the 300 level students in the three departments of Faculty of Education, Federal University Kashere. The population comprised 542 (318 males and 224 females) students. A sample consisting of 40 (20 males and 20 females) participants was drawn from the three departments sampled for the study.

Stratified sampling technique was adopted for this study. The proportional stratified sampling was used in selecting the sample from the sampling frame of the three departments in the Faculty of Education, Federal University Kashere, Gombe State. The choice of this sampling technique was informed because it ensures that different groups of which a population is composed are adequately represented in the sample size of the study. A uniform sampling fraction (SF) was used to draw 40 participants from the three departments.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: Student Mate Selection Preferences Questionnaire (SMSPQ) developed by the researcher. The instrument has two parts, namely: parts A and B. Part “A” dealt with personal information/biodata about the respondents which comprises of gender, age range, department and religion. Part “B” was arranged in two sections, that is, i and ii. Section “i” measured personality attributes, and section “ii” dealt with parental influence. Each section consisted of 5-items which helped in obtaining data from undergraduate students based on their decisions on mate selection preferences. A Likert-type Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD), was used and rated 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively for positive items and vice versa for negative items in the instrument.

The content validity of the instrument was established and found reliable for this study. The instrument was validated by two experts in Guidance and Counselling, two in Measurement and Evaluation, and one in Psychology Units of the Faculty of Education, University of Jos. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach Alpha Method which showed a reliability index of 0.87 indicating that the instrument was reliable and consistent in measuring what it sets to measure.

Data were collected and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics based on the research questions and hypotheses formulated to guide the study. The research questions were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to obtain the frequency counts and percentages because they are more accurate estimates of population parameters. The t-test for independent sample was used in testing all the hypotheses formulated for the study at 0.05 level of significance. This enables the researchers to determine whether there are
any significant differences existing between the two groups on a given dependent variable in the study.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences of the experimental group in relation to personality attributes after treatment?

The data for answering research question one were analysed using simple percentages obtained from the pretest and post-test of the instrument Students Mate Selection Preferences Questionnaire (SMSPQ). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Responses of Experimental Group in Relation to Personality After Exposure to Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mate Selection Preference Level</th>
<th>Pretest N</th>
<th>Post-test N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality attributes High</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>9 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of respondents, %=percentage of responses

Results of the analysis in Table 1 showed the pre-test results of the experimental group in relation to personality attribute with 7 (35%) had high level, 6 (30%) had moderate level and 7 (35%) at low level of mate selection preferences. The post-test results showed an improvement of mate selection preferences with 9 (45%) had high level, 7 (35%) had moderate level and 4 (20%) had low level. These results showed that mate selection preference levels have improved after treatment. The difference between the pre-test and post-test indicating the effect of REBT in relation to personality attribute. This implies that 45% of participants had high value for personality attributes, 35% had moderate value and 20% had low value for personality attribute when choosing their marriage partners.

Research Question Two: What is the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences of experimental group in relation to parental influence after exposure to treatment?

The data for answering research question two were analyzed using simple percentages obtained from the pretest and post-test of the instrument Students Mate Selection Preferences Questionnaire (SMSPQ). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Comparison of Responses of the Experimental Group in Relation to Parental Influence after Exposure to Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mate Selection Preferences Level</th>
<th>Pre-test N</th>
<th>Post-test N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence High</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>4 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
<td>20 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of respondents; %=percentage of responses
Results of the analysis in Table 2 show response percentages of experimental group towards mate selection preferences based on parental influence. From the analysis, the pre-test had 6 (30%) high level, 7 (35%) had moderate level and 7 (35%) had low level of mate preferences. After treatment, the post-test had 11 (55%) high level, 5 (25%) had moderate level and 4 (20%) had low level. From the results it is evidenced that the response percentages after treatment were high compare to the pre-test response percentages. The post-test results showed that 55% of undergraduate students have high value or regard for parent influence, 25% had moderate value and 20% had low value for parental influence. This indicates that the treatment was effective, and undergraduate students had high value for parental influence when selecting their marriage partners.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between the mate selection preferences mean scores of the experimental and control groups based on personality attribute after exposure to treatment.

**Table 3: Showing the t-test Analysis of Response Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups Based on Personality Attribute after Treatment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Null rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of respondents; X=mean of responses; SD=standard deviation; df=degree of freedom; sig. =level of significance.

In Table 3, t-test was carried out to test the mean difference between the experiment and control groups on the desire for mate selection preferences. The results of analysis revealed that the p-value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance with 38 degree of freedom. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means, there is a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups response mean scores for desired mate selection preferences based on personality attributes. This further showed that the experimental group which was exposed to treatment of REBT had significantly higher mean scores for desired mate selection preferences than the control group after treatment. Hence the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences based on personality attributes in the study area was established.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference between the mate selection preferences mean response scores of the experimental and control groups based on parental influence after exposure to treatment.
Table 4: Comparison of the Response Mean Scores of the Experimental and Control Groups Based on Parental Influence After Exposure to Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Null rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.22</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=number of respondents; X=mean of responses; SD=standard deviation; df =degree of freedom; sig. =level of significance.

In Table 4, t-test was carried out to test the mean difference between the experiment and control groups on the desire for mate selection preferences. The results of analysis showed that the p-value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 level of significance with 38 degree of freedom. Based on this result, there is no sufficient evident to retain the null hypothesis, hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups response mean scores for desired mate selection preferences based on parental influence. This further showed that the experimental group which was exposed to treatment of REBT had significantly higher mean scores for the desired mate selection preferences than the control group after treatment. Hence the effect of REBT on mate selection preferences based on parental influence has been established.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the data analysis from this study revealed that undergraduate students who were exposed to treatment (REBT) had positive behaviour change towards mate selection preferences than those who were not exposed to treatment. Hence REBT is effective in changing negative behaviour and irrational beliefs.

The findings from hypothesis one on Table 3 showed that the responses of students were high after they were exposed to treatment. The results showed that the response scores of the experimental group improved from 5 to 11 high level in relation to personality attribute after treatment. This means that there were changes in their behaviours on mate selection preferences after exposure to treatment. This agrees with the findings of Ntamu (2017) who stated that this change in scores could be ascribed to the treatment. This implies that the treatment (REBT) was effective based on personality attributes.

The results of the analysis on Table 4 showed that undergraduate students’ responses moved from low level to high level of preferences. This is an indication that the treatment was effective and that most students agreed with parental role in mate selection preferences. This is also in agreement with the findings by Modupe (2008) who found that parents influence on mate selection preferences of their children, especially in rural areas where there is a long history of each other at a disposal of issues that are secondary to present day generation. Similarly, Maliki (2009) reported that parents play a major role in choosing marriage partners.
for their children and the custom continues in the world’s developing countries today. Generally, the results revealed that student responses changed from low to high level preferences after exposure to treatment. This indicates that the treatment (REBT) was effective.

CONCLUSION

The study was carried out to investigate the effects of Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) on mate selection preferences of undergraduate students in Federal University of Kashere Gombe State, Nigeria. Based on this study, the treatment was effective in changing negative behaviours of undergraduate students on mate selection preferences in the study area. Students who were not exposed to treatment (REBT) did not show any improvement in their behaviours towards mate selection preferences. The instrument developed was adjudged valid and reliable, successfully used and can be validated again on a larger sample in different settings or locations in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should employ more trained counsellors in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria to apply the principles of REBT to counsel students on mate selection related problems. This, by extension would help to reduce the high rate of separation and divorce in Nigeria.

2. It was also recommended that workshops and seminars on REBT should be organized to acquaint both teachers, parents and significant others on how to help students and other potential couples who may have mate selection related problems. This would also change their beliefs system to more positive believes that can help in human mate selection choice.

3. Undergraduate students should study their potential mates very well before they make rational decision on mate selectin in order to avoid future marital disharmony which usually leads to separation and/or divorce.

REFERENCES


