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EFFECT OF RECIPROCAL PEER GUIDANCE ON ADOLESCENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Nwoye, Nkide Chiamaka (PhD)
Department of Guidance & Counselling
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State
doctorchiamaka@gmail.com; 08068480625

Abstract
This study assessed the effects of Reciprocal Pear Guidance (RPG) on students' engagement in family responsibilities. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The research design was quasi experimental: stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 154 SSII students from secondary schools in Onitsha Urban of Anambra State. A set of questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire was titled "Student's Engagement in Family Responsibilities Scale" (SEFRS). The study which lasted for nine weeks utilized RPG for the experiment group and conventional Guidance and Counselling (CGC) for the control group. Data were analysed using mean scores and analysis of co-variance. Findings indicated that Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG) was more effective for improving students' engagement in family responsibilities than conventional Guidance and Counselling (CGC). It was also found that the effect of RPG on the student's engagement in family responsibilities significantly differed based on gender. The implications of these findings were that RPG could be effectively used in schools to improve engagement in family responsibilities as it would enable peers to engage in social interactions as well as learn basic family responsibility skills from their peers. Based on these findings, it was recommended that ti improve engagement in family responsibilities, peer-based guidance strategies such as RPG should be adopted in addition to the conventional counselling currently being used in secondary schools. The counsellor training programmes in institutions in Nigeria should include Reciprocal Peer Guidance in order to equip would-be guidance counsellors with the techniques and processes involved in training students to use the strategy.

Keywords: Reciprocity; Peer Guidance; Adolescence; Engagement; Family Responsibility.

Introduction

The quality of students' engagement in family responsibilities and factors that promote it globally, are being scrutinized more closely. The incidences and severity of lack of students' engagement in family responsibilities are revealed by indicators such as disobedient to family rules, negligence of family duties, disruption of family routines and lack of participation in family celebrations (Akpobifre, 2004). Olarenwaju (2004) reported low levels of students' engagement in family responsibilities in Nigeria. Some adolescents abuse family values, break family ties, disregard family authorities and ignore family traditions. Nwokolo (2007) found that many adolescents in Anambra State relate poorly with their family members, have conflicts with their parents due to negligence of family responsibilities and eventually manifest several deviant behaviours within and outside their families. It appears that many in-school adolescents in Anambra State shoe persistent low patterns of engagement in family responsibilities.

Family responsibilities include those family expectations, activities and obligations required from members of a

family. Landsford, Criss,Petit, Dodge and Bates (2005) described family responsibilities as duties, activities, roles and obligations of one to the members of his/her family. Chixweobo-Onuoha and Onuoha (2009) noted that it is the responsibility of adolescents in Africa to establish trust, care for family resources, obey family rules, participate in family routines and rituals, engage in friendship with siblings, respect parents and care givers and assist in family chores. Family responsibilities for adolescents also include caring, assisting parents to perform vocational and other income generating activities, manifesting cooperation and citizenship and maintaining hygiene. According to Orellana (2008), obeying simple instructions, respect for authority, participation in family rituals and performance of allocated work roles are among the family responsibilities of adolescents. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (2010) also enumerated adolescent responsibilities in families as follows: obeying family rules: conforming to family values and norms: respect for elders, authority, communal laws and customs: keeping family secrets, being assertive and defending one's family: appropriate sexuality conduct at all times: maintaining good hygiene and eating habits: being honest, having self-control and dressing decently, operationally defined, one can say that an adolescents' family responsibility is a set of roles, codes for moral behaviour, duties, routines, values, conducts, relationship and obligations expected of an adolescent as a member of the family;

Adolescent is an important development period, a transitional phase when important choices are being made, choices that sometimes affect the entire life as a grown up person. The adolescent period is the time of identity formation and liberation from families and life challenges (Erickson, 1968; Rinaldi, 2009). Although many adolescents adjust well to the challenges of transition, some experience difficult times of storm and stress. Some do not perform the chores assigned to them in their families. For others, it is a time of criminality, drugs and psychological problems which make them to become disengaged from their family responsibilities. Akpobifre (2004) found that males show more manifestation of deviant behaviours in their families than females in areas such as careless handling of and vandalization of family property, skipping of schools, keeping their homes untidy among others. These acts of irresponsibility affect the adolescents' overall attitude to life and may predispose them to manifest conduct problems later in life. The disengagement from family responsibilities bring pain to families, severe family relationship and erode the family values which are the basic foundation for societal well-being and development. It is therefore among the objectives of guidance and counselling in secondary schools to foster students' engagement in family responsibilities.

Adolescent engagement, in family responsibility refers to the level of the commitment and execution of family responsibility by adolescents. Larsen, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck and Duckett (1996) saw it as the frequency and attributes of adolescent's dedication, diligence and devotion to their family responsibilities. Adolescents could be said to be engaged in their family responsibilities when they are always committed and dedicated to performing their family roles, obeying family rules and adhering to other family obligations. In this case, they willingly (without being constantly urged) perform their family chores, respect family rules and authorities, participate in routines and strive to perform acts that will leave desirable impressions on their families.

Nwoye (2012) opined that in a study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009) showed that in some African countries including Nigeria most techniques used by counsellors were inadequate to bring about desired engagement in family responsibilities by students. In secondary schools, Conventional Guidance and Counselling are provided by professional guidance Counsellors to a student or groups of students. This is where a student or group of students are guided and counselled by a trained, knowledgeable and older person. This is approach is used for the discussion and dissemination of information on general issues of concern and interest. The UNESCO (2009) further stated that the students lacked guidance and counselling for social issues in their families. Many school guidance counsellors work under adverse conditions such as poor status, too many students, high work load, among others. These conditions hinder them from adequately counselling students on family responsibilities. The result is that many students display low incidences of engagement in family responsibilities. In the same vein, Okeke (2011) reiterated that many adolescents manifest low engagement in family responsibilities in Nigeria, noting that some adolescents disregard family authorities break family ties, ignore family traditions, among others. Where students are not highly engaged, it implies that conventional guidance and counselling is not enough. There is therefore the need for using additional guidance and counselling techniques for improving students' engagement in family responsibilities one of such techniques is Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG).

Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG) is and innovative guidance technique that is being increasingly emphasized in behaviour modification programmes. A peer is one that is of equal standing with another, one belonging to the same social group especially based in age, grade, or status. According to Carr (2009), RPG involves the guidance and counselling of peers by others of their own age group and with similar experiences. This could be in a team, pair or one-to-one situation,. The United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF, 2010) described peer guidance as a process whereby those of the same societal group or social standing are trained to advise and guide each other. RPG consists of actions taken by individuals of the same age group that involve lending emotional and social assistance to each other in a reciprocal manner. Griffiths (2010) noted that reciprocal peer guidance is used to affect changes in knowledge, attitude, beliefs and behaviours of individuals or groups. Nwoye (2012) stated that a good example of such reciprocal peer guidance is evident in Igbo culture where the age grade system exists. This age grade system has been used to modify the behaviour of members, fight social ills as well as contribute to community development. the reason being that peer interactions impacts significantly on the behaviour pattern of one another. Hence, the researcher thinks that fi peers are given opportunity to teach themselves, they will be able to impact knowledge on one another as well as guise one another to improve on their engagement than the conventional counselling.

Peer guides are often selected from the group to be served, trained and given on-going supervision to perform some key functions generally performed by professionals. Typically, peer guides are selected from the most capable members of the peer group, trained on how to listen and support one another but to offer little or no advice to other students being helped. Rather than being an advice giver or a problem solver, the peer guide is a

sensitive listener who uses communication skills to facilitate self-exploration and decision-making. The peers are also trained to encourage;

1. Genuineness- Rigorous honesty which shuns self-deception.
2. The essential freedom and autonomy of each individual to express him/her through choice and
3. The awareness of family responsibility as an obligation not a burden.

After the training, they are assigned to groups to direct the RPG sessions by discussing problems, eliciting and summarizing information, critiquing the behaviour of peers, giving and receiving feedback, correcting errors, questioning thought processes and justifications, and explaining rationales for certain behaviours (Walker, Mclaren, Rummel and Koedinger, 2007). They also alternate roles with other peer members as guide and guided. These RPG activities differ from the conventional guidance technique (CGT) where the professional counsellor provides all guidance and counselling activities to students.

The researcher is motivated to study the effects of RPG on adolescents' engagement in family responsibilities because of obvious reasons. In th Igbo society, age grade systems and youth associations are being successfully used for peer guidance. Besides, during adolescence, peers become increasingly important for emotional well-being while the parents' role decrease. The adolescents are more likely to share age related concerns with peers (Noller, Feeney and Feeney, 2011). In company of with peers, adolescents start to separate from their parents and to move into the adult world. Such separation might positively or adversely affect their engagement in family responsibilities. Studies in Carr (2011) Noller, Feeney and Feeney (2011) have shown that confronted with personal, stressful or troubling issues, in most cases, the adolescents are more likely to share their fears and concerns with peers. In school situation, students are likely to contact fellow students when they are experiencing problems and concerns before they approach their teachers especially on family matters. Hence, de-Rosenroll (2010) noted that there is an increasing effort in several countries to employ a peer approach in their adolescent programmes and activities to facilitate the adolescents' improvement on their engagement in family responsibilities.

Reciprocal Peer Guidance could be used to improve situations by training capable peer helpers in the skills to deal with peer's interpersonal issues, under regular supervision, either by a qualified counsellor who would manage the RPG scheme. The researcher thinks that male and female students may perceive the strategy differently. This is buttressed by Strafford et al (2005) in Nwoye (2014), who opined that men and women may view their environment differently having found out that women are more likely than men to report that pollution and the global environment are of serious concern to them. In the same vein, Enrique et al (2005) in Nwoye (2014) while observing the role of gender in perceived environmental correlates explained that women may face a barrier in ding physical activity than men. Conversely, Konrad and Hartman (2001) found that gender was not a significant factor in attitudes to family responsibilities among people that participated in a peer education programme. The present study also focuses on the effect of RPG on the engagement of students in family responsibilities and whether it impacts differently on male and female students. It therefore becomes important to empirically determine the effects of Reciprocal Peer Guidance on engagement in family responsibilities

among male and female adolescents, hence the study.

Nwoye (2012), emphasized that many adolescents in secondary schools experience a mixture of cultures namely; the traditional and the western type of cultures which are more often than not, conflicting in family responsibilities. The result is that many adolescents do not engage properly in their family responsibilities. Nwokolo (2007) in Nwoye (2012) found that many adolescents appear to be disenchanted with their assigned family chores due to their negative attitudes to the family responsibilities which may lead to the erosion of the family responsibilities. In the same vein, Feinauer (2009) opined that where the family responsibilities are eroded, the societal structure and values may all fall apart, deviant behaviours among adolescents may escalate and the very foundations of societal development may crumble, unfortunately, the conventional guidance and counselling provided in schools are insufficient for improving adolescents' engagement in family responsibilities. There is therefore a need to find ways of improving adolescents' engagement um family responsibilities.

Fortunately, in Igbo society, age grade system (peer) and youth associations are being used successfully for peer guidance. In line with these theorists, counsellors, psychologists such as Carr (2007), Egbochukwu (2007), Griffith (2010) and Tindall (2009) have proposed that Reciprocal Peer Guidance could be an effective guidance and counselling intervention for modifying adolescents' attitude and engagement. Given this line of thought, and the seemingly inadequacies of an effective guidance and counselling intervention method as shown in the increasingly wave of adolescent disengagement in family responsibilities, a question that one may ask "what is the effect of RPG on adolescents' engagement in family responsibilities? Providing answers to this question is the crux of this paper.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study;

1. What are the effects of Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG) when compared with Conventional Guidance and Counselling (CGC) on students' engagement with family responsibilities?
2. What are the mean gains of male and female students' engagement with family responsibilities after exposure to RPG.

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 level of significant.

Ho_1There is no significant difference in the mean engagement in family responsibilities between students that participated in RPG and those that received CGC.

Ho_1The effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities do not differ significantly due to gender.

Research Method

This study was based on a quasi-experiment design. The non-randomized control, pre-test and post-test design was adopted. One of the groups was the experimental group that received Reciprocal Peer Guidance while the other was the control group that was exposed to Conventional Guidance and Counselling. This research design allowed the researcher to assess how the intervention of RPG would impact adolescent engagement in family responsibilities by comparing the results of the control group with those who had received RPG. This study was carried out in Onitsha urban of Anambra State. The population of this

study consisted of the entire senior secondary II students in the 22 State government owned secondary schools in Onitsha Urban of Anambra State. The population was 7,867 male and female students enrolled for the 2011/2012 academic sessions (Post Primary Schools Service Commission, PPSSC 2012). A sample of one hundred and fifty-four (154) students was selected for the study. Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling technique were used to select the subject for this. The instrument used to collect the required data was the "Students' Engagement in Family Responsibilities Scale" (SEFRS) designed by the researcher, to identify the extent of students' engagement in family responsibilities. The face and content validity of the research instrument were obtained through critical evaluation of the Engagement in Family Responsibilities Scale by five lecturers, two from the Measurement and Evaluation and three from the Guidance and Counselling Department of the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The validators reviewed the items of content relevance and relatedness to the title for the study. Their suggestions were incorporated and ambiguities eliminated in the final copies of the instrument. The reliability of the research instrument was determined by split half reliability method. Copies of the instrument were administered on a sample of 20 SS II students (10 males and 10 females) in a co-educational school in Otuocha education zone. The responses to the instrument separated into even and odd numbers. The sets of even and odd numbered scores for the instrument were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained. Prior to the beginning of this study, 4 schools were selected from the area of the study. From these schools, 154 SSII students in their intact classes were purposively selected and assigned to 2 groups. One group (n=76) participated in Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG) while the other group (N=78) received Conventional Guidance & Counselling (CGC).

The study was designed to last for nine weeks using the normal school time table of 45 minutes for Guidance & Counselling for the experimental group, (RPG), the first two weeks were used for training of the 18 peer guides nominated by the school counsellor and who obtained the highest scores in the pre-test give a week prior to the initiation of RPG and CGC interventions. The training was in two segments. The first segment lasted for one week (5 working days) and was for the training of the entire students in the experimental group. The segment involved 5 sessions of one hour each. The training which was carried out by the researcher and the school counsellors immediately after school, focused on the nature and the scope of counselling, scope of peer counselling, basic helping and counselling skills, as well as roles and functions of these peer guides in their groups. It also included a session on adolescents' family responsibilities. After the training, the researcher identified the 16 best participating students and designated them as peer guides.

These peer guides were further given three days with six sessions of 45 minutes each training on reflections of peer guidance, adolescent counselling skills as peer team guides while the remaining one guide was made a facilitator counsellor. Here, the students were introduced to the notion that they could guide and advise one another as friends and mates. Sample activities discussing family responsibilities were given to each student as a reference, and each RPG team took part I discussing family responsibilities. The control group consisted of conventional guidance and counselling techniques with the school guidance counsellors providing the

services to the students one-to-one and group counselling techniques involving questioning, reinforcement, listening and open communication on family responsibilities. A post-test on engagement in family responsibilities were administered to both the experimental and control groups at the end of the nine weeks of treatment. Mean score was used to answer the research questions and the analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA), and t-test at 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypotheses.

Presentation of Results

Research question1: What are the effects of Reciprocal Peer Guidance (RPG) when compared with Conventional Guidance and Counselling (CGC) on students' engagement in family responsibilities?

Table 1: Means for the effect of RPG and CGC on students' engagement in family responsibilities.

Variables	N	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	Remark
Experimental Group (RPG)	76	118.75	134.01	15.26	RPG≥CGC
Control Group (CGC)	78	119.39	119.93	0.56	

Results in Table 1 showed that the mean pre-test score for the 76 students in experimental group (RPG) was 118.75 while that of students in the control group was 119.39. This indicates that prior to the commencement of the experiment, the RPG students engaged less in family responsibilities than their counterpart in the CGC group did. The mean post-test score for the students in experimental group (RPG) was 134.01 while that of the control group was 119.93. Further, the RPG group obtained a positive mean gain of 15.26 while the CGC group had a mean gain of 0.56. The mean gain of the students in the RPG group was higher than that of the CGC group. Hence, RPG has more positive effect on students' engagement in family responsibilities than the CGC.

Research question 2: What are the mean gains of male and female students' engagement with family responsibilities after exposure to RPG?

Table 2: Means of engagement with family responsibilities of students in experimental (RPG) group based on gender.

Variable	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain Mean	Remark
Male	38	118.87	137.18	18.31	RPG is effective
Female	38	118.63	130.84	12.21	For both male and female students

Results in Table 2 Indicated that male students in the RPG group had mean gains of 18.31 and female students in the same group had mean gains of 12.21. Therefore, RPG was effective in improving male and female students' engagement with family responsibilities to a great extent.

Hypotheses 1: The effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities do not differ significantly due to gender.

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Table 3: Summary of ANCOVA for the main effect of RPG and CGC on students' engagement in family responsibilities

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F-cal	F-crit	P≥0.05
Corrected model	17670.664	2	8835.332			
Intercept	39309.745	1	39309.74			
Engagement test 1	126.657	1	126.657			
Treatment model	17595.409	1	17595.409	42.615	3.84	Significant
Error	61521.277	149	412.894			
Total	2388897.0	152				
Corrected total	0191.941	151				

The data in table 3 is the summary of ANCOVA for the main effects of RPG and CGC on students' engagement in family responsibilities which shows F-149 degree of freedom, (P≥0.05). Since the F-cal is greater than the F-crit, the decision is to reject the null hypotheses. Thus, there is a significant difference in engagement in family responsibilities between students exposed to RPG and those that received CGC.

Hypotheses 2: The effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities do not differ significantly due to gender.

Table 4: ANCOVA for the effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities by gender

Source of variance	Sum of squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-cal;	F-crit.	P≥0.05
Corrected model	790.600	2	395.300	3.89		
Intercept	24184.279	1	24184.279	238.240		
Engagement test 1	26.377	1	26.377	0.26		
Treatment model	766.361	1	766.361	7.55	3.97	Significant
Error	7410.386	73	101.512			
Total	1373125.00	76				
Corrected Total	4829.324	75				

The ANCOVA in table 4 shows F-calculated value of 7.55 and F-critical value of 3.97 at 3 and 73 degree of freedom (P≥0.05). The F-calculated exceeded the F-critical. Going by this result, the hypotheses of no significant difference is not accepted. Hence, the effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities differed significantly due to gender.

Discussion of Findings

In table 1, the findings of the study indicated that prior to the commencement of the experiment, the RPG students engaged less in family responsibilities than their counterparts in the CGC group did. The result of the study found that RPG is more effective in enhancing students' engagement in family responsibilities than the CGC. This finding supported that of Tindall (2009) and Okubo and Yeh (2011) who found RPG very effective in increasing students commitment to family obligations. The total involvement of students in RPG might have made it possible for them to understand family responsibilities better than the students exposed to CGC. RPG as used in the study is more participatory and student-centred than the CGC, by involving the students finding solution on their own, sharing

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others ideas and experiences with limited counselling from their school counsellors.

The null Hypothesis showed a significant difference in engagement in family responsibilities between students that participated in RPG and those exposed to CGC. This finding agrees with those of Brigman and Campbell (2003), Obiunu (2006) and Egbochukwu and Obiunu (2006), who reported that the peer group dynamics is very helpful in affecting changes in behaviour. Such change in behaviour in this study is manifested in improvements in students' engagement in family responsibilities.

In table 2, the findings showed that male students in the RPG group had mean gains of 18.31 and female students in the same group had mean gains of 12.21. Therefore, RPG improved engagement for male and female students. RPG is effective in improving male students' engagement with family responsibilities as it does for female students. The null hypothesis showed that the effects of RPG on the status of students' engagement in family responsibilities differed significantly due to gender. This significance difference due to gender does not conform what has been shown in previous studies where performances in experimental peer group did not vary based on gender (Konrad & Hartman, 2001: Rinaldi, 2009). One of the reasons for the significant gender difference could be Hawthorne Effect. This Hawthorne effect states that by merely participating in a test, trial or study, that some of the participants have a better experience because the focus of interest toward them is gratifying and thus rewarding in its own sake (Maheady et al, 2006). Hence, by merely participating in the peer interactions in this study, male students in the experimental group might have put in their best to see that they achieved tangible results over the female students. Another reason for the significant difference between male and female students might also be because the study was carried out in-school, outside the students' homes, which could have helped the male students in the RPG group, to step out of family gender-stero-typing and achieve very high post—test scores.

Conclusion

The study reveals that Reciprocal Peer Guidance had a significant positive effect on students' engagement in family responsibilities more than the Conventional Guidance and Counselling. Specifically, under RPG gender was a significant factor in the effectiveness of RPG on students' engagement in family responsibilities. Based on this finding, it is concluded that the effective use of RPG can contribute significantly to increasing students' engagement in family responsibilities irrespective of the students' gender.

Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed above, the following discussions were made:

- To enhance students' engagement in family responsibilities, new activity-based counselling strategies such as RPG should be adopted by Guidance counsellors in secondary schools.
- The teacher training programmes in Nigeria should include Reciprocal Peer Guidance in order to equip would-be guidance counsellors with the techniques and processes involved in training students to use the strategy.
- The Anambra State Post Primary Schools Service Commission should provide on-the-job training to practicing guidance counsellors on the use of RGP through

workshop, seminars, symposia and conference.

- Guidance and counselling specialists should collaborate with NERSC or other support services to produce RPG packages and materials on family responsibilities suitable for the Nigerian learners.

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