

## **SELF-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUE AS STRATEGY FOR FOSTERING FRIENDSHIP-MAKING ABILITY AMONG PEER-REJECTED ADOLESCENTS**

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### **Abstract**

Peer –rejection and its implications have received considerable research attention. However, this is not true of intervention research. A major challenge of the peer-rejected is the ability to make friends. This study analyzes the results of an intervention in improving the friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents. Specifically, it investigated the effectiveness of self-management technique in fostering friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents in some secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. A pre-test, post-test and control group research design of 2x2 factorial matrix was used for the study. Emotional intelligence was introduced as a moderating variable. Ninety one peer-rejected students were identified through a socio-metric test. The schools were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. The treatment group made up of 49 adolescents was exposed to eight-week self-management technique training while participants in the control group (42 adolescents) received placebo training. The participants responded to a validated Peer Attachment Inventory and emotional intelligence test at both pre and post intervention sessions. The hypothesis that there is no significant difference in friendship-making ability scores between participants in the self-management group and those in the control was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained indicated a significant main effect of treatment on the friendship-making ability of the participants. It is recommended that self-management techniques should be introduced in school programmes.

**Keywords:** Self-management, self-management technique, friendship-making, peer-rejected adolescents.

### **Introduction**

Peer rejection is increasingly receiving the attention of researchers. For instance, its conceptualization has been of considerable interest to several researchers (e.g. Chen, Drabick & Burgers, 2015; Lansford, Dodge, Fontaine, Bates, Pettit, 2014; Dijkstra, Lindenberg & Veenstra, 2007; American Psychological Association, 2006; Bierman & Cillessen, 2006; Buhs, Ladd & Herald, 2006 and Bierman, 2005). A general consensus is that peer-rejection is an experience of being actively disliked by one's peers. This is a situation in which the individual is deliberately excluded from social relationship by peers through bullying, teasing, ridiculing or ignoring. Peer-rejection can be challenging especially when it results in social isolation (Williams et al, 2005; Asher, Rose & Gabriel, 2001). The outcome of rejection is linked to a number of adverse

psychological consequences such as aggression, disruptiveness, low self-esteem, loneliness and depression (Platt, Kadosh, Jennifer & Lau, 2013; McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt & Mercer, 2001).

Adolescents that are rejected by other peers are seriously at risk and may encounter social, psychological and mental health challenges which could have negative effects on their general well-being. Furthermore, adolescents who are less accepted by their peers in school tend to get lower grades and are rated as more anxious, fearful and depressed (Flook, Repetti & Ullman, 2005).

Improving the friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents is fundamental in their well-being (Mikami, 2010 and Mikami & Henshaw, 2003). Other studies (Kenning, Coventry & Bowen, 2014; Veronneau & Dishion, 2011, Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez & McDermott, 2000) show that lack of friends may result in numerous challenges, such as academic failure, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, anxiety and fatigue.

Individuals in various ways, such as writing notes in diaries and setting alarm clock to remind themselves of events, engage in self-management behaviours that give a sense of responsibility. Self-management connotes an individual's action meant to improve his or her behaviour (Sherifali, Berard, Gucciardi, MacDonald & MacNeill, G. 2018; Kenning, Coventry & Bowen, 2014; Olorun Femi-Olabisi, & Akomolafe, 2013; Murray, 2012; Miltenberger, 2011; Greasko-Moore, DuPaul & White 2007; Storey, 2007 and Malamuth 2005). When individuals manage themselves, they have more autonomy to perform task instead of depending on others to perform the tasks for them. Individuals learn how to manage themselves in order to operate successfully in the society. Several studies ( Palvalin, Voordt, & Jylhä, 2017; Alpert, 2016; Grady & Gough, 2014; Olorun Femi-Olabisi & Akomolafe, 2013; Clark, Frankel, Morgen et al, 2008; Bergen, Soper & Gaster, 2002) pointed to the fact that success in today's knowledge economy comes to those who manage themselves effectively.

Self-management interventions assist individuals in maintaining desirable behaviour. This can be done through self- monitoring (Hunter, Williamson, Jasper, Casey & Smith, 2017; Kanani, Adibsereshki, Haghgoo, 2017; Wills & Mason, 2014; Theisinger, 2014; Briesch & Daniels, 2013; Mooney et al., 2005; Rock, 2005; Otten, 2003), self- evaluation (Hulsman & Vloodt, 2014; Baleghizadeh & Masoun, 2013; Mooney et al. 2005), self- reinforcement (Rumfola, 2017; Bahn, Mirnasah, et al 2016; Kaplan, Hemmes, Motz & Rodriguez, 1996 and Ogier & Hornby, 1996) and goal setting (Bruhn, McDaniel, Frenando, Troughton 2016).

Studies have shown that self-management technique is effective in reducing the potentials or terrorism and violence among adolescents (Olanrewaju & Olufumilayo's, 2014), remediating the aggressive behaviour of visually impaired adolescents (Eniola, 2007), in addressing health conditions (Boger, Ellis, Latter, et. al 2015; Grady & Gough 2014, Gao & Yuan, 2011), for improving academic performance ( Olorun Femi-Olabisi & Akomolafe, 2013, Murray 2012, Malamuth, 2005) and improving the productivity of workers ( Palvalin, Voordt, & Jylhä, 2017). However, the use of self-management technique in addressing the friendship-making ability of peer rejected adolescents is neglected in the literature.

This study examines the effectiveness of self management technique in fostering friendship-making ability among peer rejected adolescents, using a sample drawn from two secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. It also analyses the significance of emotional intelligence, in the effectiveness of self-management techniques. The self-management techniques employed are self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, self-talk and goal-setting.

In other to achieve the objectives of this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

- I. There is no significant difference in the friendship-making ability scores between participants in the self-management group and those in the control group; and
- II. There is no significant difference in the friendship making ability scores of the high and the low emotionally intelligent participants exposed to self management technique.

## **Method**

The method is divided into two aspects. These are: participants and instruments / procedure.

### **Participants**

Two secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria were involved in the program. One of the schools served as the experimental group while the other served as the control. The students chosen for the research were in Junior Secondary School class two. These were students in the second year of their secondary school education, after 6 years of primary school education. The total no of students at that level was one hundred and fifty in each of the schools. In other words, 300 students were involved. Ninety one (91) peer-rejected students (46 males and 45 females) selected through sociometric test participated in the programme. The experimental group school and control groups had 49 (24 males and 25 females) and 42 (22 males and 20 females) participants respectively. The ages of the identified peer rejected students varied between 11 and 17 while the mean and standard deviation of their ages were 13.13 and 1.54 years respectively.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

Four instruments were used. These were the sociometric test, the Peer Attachment test, emotional intelligence test and the self-management technique. Sociometric Test (Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli, 1982) was used to select the peer-rejected adolescents who participated in this study. The technique involved asking students to nominate all the peers in their class they like the most and those they like the least. Students indicated their nominations by writing on a sheet of paper. Through these nominations the researcher was able to determine social acceptance and rejection of each individual in the class. The number of least like nominations a student received was summed up. The mean for the entire group was computed and found to be 5. Based on this, a student whose nomination was 5 or greater than 5 was regarded as peer-rejected.

The Peer Attachment test, a modified form of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) was used to assess participants' perception of relationships with their peers. The original version of the IPPA consisted of twenty-eight parent items and twenty-five peer friendship items. The researcher adopted the peer friendship aspect of the inventory to suit the purpose of this study. It is a self-report questionnaire which has two sections: A and B. Section A is designed to obtain personal information of the respondents: school, class, gender and age while section B contains 25 positively worded items which border on

adolescents' friendship-making. The instrument was structured on a 4 Likert-scale response format of 1(Always never true), 2(never true), 3(Sometimes true), 4(Always true). The highest obtainable score for the scale is 100 while the lowest score is 25. The use of this test by the researcher resulted in a test-retest reliability of 0.86 and an internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.92.

The emotional intelligence test (EIT) employed is a 33- item self-statement scale used to measure participant's emotions in self and others developed and validated by Schutte, Marlouf, Cooper, Golden and Donheim (1998). Scores from EIT were used to group the participants into high and low levels of emotional intelligence. The use of this test by the researcher resulted in a test-retest reliability of 0.78 and Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of 0.87.

Self-management technique was applied on the peer-rejected. The intervention lasted for a period of 8 weeks. The procedure used in self-management training is presented in table 1

**Table 1 – Procedure used in self –management Training**

Sessions	Goal	Procedure/Activity
1.	General Orientation	Briefing on the research instruments (peer attachment test and emotional intelligence test) and administration of the instruments as pretest.
2.	An understanding of the concept of self-management	Explaining the concept and usefulness of self-management
3.	Understanding the concept of goal-setting	A discussion on setting a specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely goal
4.	Understanding the concept of self-monitoring, identify some negative behaviour in adolescents	Explaining the usefulness of self-monitoring. Training on managing own behaviour using daily self-monitoring chart
5.	Understanding the concept of self-evaluation	Training on judging oneself to see if there is a positive change in behavior
6.	Understanding the concept of self-reinforcement	Discussion on when and how to reinforce self
7.	Modification of negative self-statement/talk	Teaching the peer-rejected on negative self-statement/self-talk and negative self-assessment
8.	Summing up of the previous sessions and making recommendations	Provide posttest administration and closing of the programme

The data obtained through the self-management intervention and those of the control group were subjected to t-test analysis. The test of difference between the trained group and the control group is presented in table 2.

**Table 2: T-test analysis of the level of significant in the difference between the trained group and control group**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	mean diff	Df	cal- t	t-table	level of significance
SMT	49	82.04	8.79	7.59	89	3.74	1.98	0.05
Control	42	74.45	10.59					

Table 2 shows the result of the Test of difference between those subjected to training and the control group. The difference is significant at 0.05. The implication of this is that the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between trained group and control group is rejected. In other words, there is a significant difference between the trained group and non-trained group ( $t = 3.74$ ,  $df = 89$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The trained group significantly performed better than the untrained group. The implication of this is that self-management training is an effective intervention for improving the friendship-making ability of the peer-rejected.

The data obtained through the high and low emotional intelligence test of those in the self-management intervention were subjected to T-test analysis. This is presented in table 3.

**Table 3: T- test comparison of friendship-making ability test scores between low and high emotionally intelligent participants in the self-management technique (SMT) group.**

Variables	N	Mean	SE	mean diff	Df	cal- t	t-table	level of sig significant
Low EI	17	76.24						0.05
			<b>0.65</b>	<b>8.89</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>9.12</b>	<b>4.14</b>	
High EI	32	85.13						

Table 3 reveals the result of the test of difference between the high and the low emotional intelligent adolescents subjected to self-management intervention. The difference is significant at 0.05. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the high and the low emotional intelligent adolescents in the trained group is therefore rejected. This means that there is a significant difference between the high and the low emotional intelligent adolescents subjected to self-management intervention ( $t = 4.14$ ,  $df = 47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The high emotional intelligent students performed better than the low emotional intelligence student. The implication of this is that self-management intervention is effective for improving the friendship-making ability of the high emotionally intelligent peer-rejected.

### **Discussion of findings**

The study has established the effectiveness of self-management technique and the moderating role played by emotional intelligence to foster the friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents. The test of the first hypothesis shows a significant difference in the effectiveness of self-management training on the friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents. The implication of this finding is that the intervention is potent in fostering friendship making ability among peer rejected adolescents.

The present findings are consistent with the work of various researchers (Eniola, 2007 and Ihuoma 2000), who use self- management techniques successfully in managing behaviour problems such as aggressiveness, potentials of violence and social anxiety. Gureasko-Moore, DuPaul & White (2007) study also confirms the result of this study.

The results also indicate significant difference between high emotionally intelligent and low emotionally intelligent participants in the SMT intervention. The implication is that the treatment has more effect on the high emotionally intelligent participants than the low emotionally intelligent participants. This result is consistent with that of David & Nicholas (2016) and Lekavicieneh & Antiniene (2017).

### **Conclusion**

This study has established that self-management techniques are highly effective in enhancing friendship-making ability among peer-rejected adolescents. Therefore, there is need to expose peer-rejected adolescents to the technique so as to equip them adequately with interpersonal skills which they actually need to interact with their peers and integrate into the society.

Based on the findings of this study the researcher recommends that various institutions of learning through the assistance of the government should use the behaviour change strategies as to develop in these adolescents, a desirable and proper personality. Equally to make the programme effective, seminars conferences and symposium should be organized for classroom teachers on how to use these behaviour modification strategies to help in fostering friendship-making ability of peer-rejected adolescents.

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