

**INFLUENCE OF COPING STRATEGIES ON THE PRESSURE
ORIENTED ACADEMIC STRESS OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED IN
OJI-RIVER PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

This research was done to establish the influence of coping strategies on the pressure orientated academic stress of the visually impaired pupils in Oji River School for the blind, Enugu state. It is a non-equivalent control group pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design involving two treatment groups and one control group. Twenty visually impaired pupils from senior primary classes of the school were used for the work. Multi-stage sampling, Cluster sampling and simple random sampling were appropriately used to get at the sample. The data obtained from the administration of the instrument were organized and analyzed by using mean scores, standard deviation and a 3x2 Analysis of covariance. The research findings show that exposing the visually impaired pupils to goal setting and time management significantly eased off their pressure oriented academic stress which indicated exciting prospect in primary education for the visually impaired pupils.

Key words: Visual impairment, Academic Stress, Pressure oriented stress, Goal setting, Time management.

Education is indispensable to all in this country. Primary education is the foundation of education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) asserted that the rest of the education system is built

upon primary education hence the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. In a bid to meet the challenges of exceptional children it became imperative to introduce Special Education. It is worthy to note the prevalence of the special need persons in the population of this nation. The World health

organization (WHO, 1981) disclosed that 10% of the population of any country in Africa is disabled. The assumption therefore, is that 14.1 million people in Nigeria have various disabilities going by the report of the 2006 census figure that Nigeria population amounts to 141 million.

It would be too dangerous socially, economically, to ignore more than 14 million people let alone the adverse effect of such negligence on the realization of Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) and Education for all (EFA). In other words if people are truly the arrow-heads and objects of development, Special needs education is required to develop exceptional person so as to bring out their best as well as the desired progress and development in society. The goals of primary education (F.R.N, 2004) among others are, to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively, provide the child with basic tools for further educational achievement... Nwolise (2004) and Kalu (2004) decried the disadvantageous and inferior position that people with special needs find themselves in the country and the attendant lack of prospects for several developments. The above implies too that in the education of special needs children which include the visually impaired, the possibility that something positive or exciting will happen (prospect) is lacking in Nigeria. This

could be because their education is difficult to deal with or understand (problem). The issue now is in the face of the problem can there be prospects in primary education for the visually impaired in this country. Kalu further maintained that many of these people with special needs lack health care, cannot train or get job, have no access to education and cannot move freely because of barriers.

Prominent category of special needs individual is the visually impaired. This impairment affects sense of sight. Impairment becomes more empathetic where it affects sense of vision. Visual deviation stirs reaction and action; doubt and denial between expectation and the real situation at hand (Ozoji, 2005). Vision is an important factor in the development process and well being of children and adults. Okeke (2001) referred the visually impaired to as those who have difficulty in seeing which necessitates the use of special education methods or adoptions to material the need to use special aid equipment for learning. Visual impairment is experienced by an individual as he/she strives to cope in his/her society and to overcome attitudes and obstacles that prevent him or her from being fully integrated into the society. America foundation for the Blind (1993) perceived visual impairment as the consequence of loss of vision.... The foundation identified types of visually impaired to be

partially sighted (poor sight but not such to be regarded as blind, low vision (people certified blind though with residual vision), legally and totally blind (total loss of sight). Vision is important in education such that any degree of loss in sight tells much on the person such that it subjects one to challenging situation. This is epitomized in the revelation by Mba (1985) that eighty percent (80%) of learning activities come from sense of sight.

The foregoing development subjects the visually impaired in school to Stress: academic stress and specifically pressure oriented academic stress. It is a truism that the entire world, today, is in turbulence politically, socially, economically and to say the least educationally Nigerians in Nigeria being part of the world have fair share of the situation. Worse off, the visually impaired being functional unit in the system take part in the baptism of fire directly and indirectly. Bruno (1986) perceived stress as the system of internal force, organic or psychological tending to produce wear and tear on an individual. Every visually impaired individual experiences double effect as an individual and as individual with special needs. No wonder Eke (2006) asserted that visual impairment is a stressor and also stress manifest. In primary school, the visually impaired are prone to academic stress. Ngoka (2000)

perceived academic stress as those experiences that subject one to academic pressure, worry; financial handicap, poor feeling and problem of inter personal relationship. Gupta and Khan (1987) in Eke (2006) opined that an academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some apprehended frustration associated with academic failure; apprehensions of such failure or awareness of the possibility of such failure. Shah (1988) disclosed that in the context of school, academic stress means a pervasive sense of urgency to learn all those things which are related to or prescribed by the school. Eke (2006) viewed academic stress as the combination of academic related demand that exceed the adaptive resource available to an individual. The visually impaired in schools are prone to burnout as they feel exhausted due to study demands.

There are different forms of academic stress. There are different dimensions of academic stress identified by Eke (2006) which are academic pressure, academic worry, academic impediment and academic disappointment. The focus of this present study is academic pressure otherwise called pressure oriented academic stress. He conceptualized pressure oriented academic stress as urgent, pressing or / and force exerted on somebody (the visually impaired) to learn all materials related or prescribed by the school. He listed factors that are

considered pressure oriented academic stress thus: combination of study with other home chores; left over of uncompleted work schedule prone to completion; Teacher strictness to time schedule; meeting up with dead line in school work; confrontation of challenging academic problems; and available time for other worth while activities apart from school work.

They above have proved academic stress even to the sighted learners, let alone the visually impaired from available studies. Academic stress; especially pressure oriented academic stress can be ultimate academic stopper. One is wont to ask if prospects abound for the visually impaired in primary school. There seem to be ray of hope of prospects. The popular key to avoid becoming a drop out or prevailing on the pangs of stress is to identify coping strategy. Coping behavior is indispensable especially to the visually impaired due their encounter in schools and outside school. Eke (2006) saw coping as a process of managing external and internal demands that task or exceed the resources of the person. To Agulana (1994) coping is an active effort t to resolve and create new ways of handling new situations at each life stage.

There could be coping strategies to help the pressure oriented academic stress of the visually impaired. The aims/objectives of special

needs education are not yet realistic especially giving concrete meaning to the idea of equalization of educational opportunity for all children... and provision of adequate education for all people with special needs. . Iheanacho (2001) disclosed that the objectives are not realized and as such pose academic difficulty to the disabled. He revealed the confessional statement of the government that so far, the delivering of services for the exceptional children (including the visually impaired) is minimal largely due to inadequate fund. The service to the visually impaired in school is not only epileptic but fast moving into the state of comatose. This is where the problem of children with special needs particularly the visually impaired starts from. This brings the pressure oriented academic stress before the visually impaired such that the only way out is coping strategies. Nwolise (2004) uncovered that most disabled persons cannot get quality education and training to enable them gainful employment such that they feel frustrated, helpless, angry, abandoned and unwanted in the society ending up unfulfilled.

It is indeed a high time, effort was made to help the visually impaired develop potential, and contribute to national development and actualize selves. This points at perceived prospects for the visually impaired in primary schools. The panacea is therefore; coping strategies to fight the

stress. Two popular coping strategies are Goal setting and Time management strategies. Agulanu (1994).stated that time management is a set of discipline on the use of time that once mastered enables one to do anything one wants, or needs to achieve in life giving one greatest pleasure and happiness. Goal setting (Essuman, Nwachukwu & Nwaogu; 1990) is a process of identifying problems and changes them to set goals that are achievable.

The visually impaired could use the strategies to check the pressure oriented stress. The researcher therefore wished to use these coping strategies on visually impaired pupils in Oji River School for the blind in Enugu state. The goal setting propounded by Essuman et al (1990) as applied in this study is a process of identifying and defining problems and changing them to set goal that are achievable. Wilson's (2003) maxim of time management as applied in this study for the visually impaired is to plan, organize and control time during academic activities.

Studies on coping strategies else where proved successful to the visually impaired. Kabuga' (2003) study of blind student from India affirmed that ability to plan, set goal make the student not to be under any academic pressure. . Wilson (2003) disclosed that effective use of time ensures that no time is lost but rather

gained from one hour to one and half hours.

In view of the foregoing importance of goal setting and time management strategies, this study became imperative to expose the visually impaired pupils at Oji –River school for the blind in the use of these coping strategies to determine how they influence pressure oriented academic stress.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to establish the influence of coping strategies on pressure oriented academic stress of the visually impaired pupils of Oji-River School for the blind, Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to examine

1. Influence of goal setting on the visually impaired pupils' pressure oriented academic stress.
2. Influence of time management on the visually impaired pupils' pressure oriented academic stress.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the influence of Goal setting on the visually impaired pressure oriented academic stress?
2. What is the influence of Time management on the visually impaired pressure oriented academic stress.

Hypothesis

Instructions on the goal setting or time management have no significant influence on the visually impaired pupils' pressure oriented academic stress as measured by their means on VIPO-ASQ

Methods

Design

The design was pre-test and post-test quasi experimental design of the influence of instructional programmes on goal setting and time management on the visually impaired pressure oriented academic stress.

Population

The population consisted of 65 visually impaired pupils in the primary schools of Oji-River School for the Blind, Enugu State..

Sample

The sample for the study was made up of 20 visually impaired pupils. Two groups of treatment group had 7 pupils each while control had 6 pupils.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a set of questionnaire developed by the research named visually impaired pressure oriented academic stress questionnaire (VIPO-ASQ).The instrument has Igbo Version where item statements and response options were translated into Igbo by Igbo linguistic expert. This was used for pre-test and also post-test after reshuffling the items.

It consists of 7 item statements meant to elicit information on pressure oriented academic stress. The pupils were required to indicate on a 4-point scale—the degree of agreement or otherwise to each of the statements on pressure oriented academic stress. The instrument was validated by 4 experts, one each from measurement and Evaluation, Special Education, Guidance and Counseling and Educational Psychology. The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering it on the visually impaired pupils in school for the blind Umuahia in Abia State. The internal consistency was computed using Cronbach Alpha which gave reliability co-efficient of .79. This affirmed the reliability of the instrument.

Instructional Programme

There were two instructional programmes one respectively on goal setting and time management.Goal setting skills dwelt on identification and definition of problems and ability to change them to achievable set goals. Time management skills focused on how to plan, organize and control time during academic exercises. Three research assistants were groomed for the two instructional programmes and the placebo. The placebo was done to keep the control group busy with activity different from treatment such that no effect is produced. They were as well validated by 4 experts mentioned above. The 2 programmes were (one each) for the two treatment

groups while for control group placebo were used.

Procedure for Data Collection

Upon receipt of letter of introduction by school for the Blind Oji-River, there was proper access to the school. The research assistants administered the instrument as pre-test on these groups determined by the researcher himself. This was done by calling each pupil at a distance where the research assistant read each item statement and response options accordingly. After the pre- test, there were instruction on goal setting and time management skills as treatments. . Each time the treatments were in progress, the control group was kept busy with placebo by the third research assistant. This lasted 5 weeks. Post-testing of the instrument took place after reshuffling the. Item statements.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean score and standard deviation were utilized to answer research questions. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to

test hypothesis to determine significant difference in the groups' means at 0.05 levels. Scheffe's multiple comparison technique was used to show direction of difference among the mean scores.

Results

1. What is the influence of goal setting on the visually impaired pupils' pressure oriented academic stress?
2. What is the influence of time management on the visually impair pupils' pressure oriented academic stress.

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Table I: Visually Impaired Pupils' Pre-test and Post-test (GS) Mean Scores on Academic Pressure

GROUPS	PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	SD	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	SD
Goal setting	7	18.86	1.95	7	7.57	.53
Control	6	18.00	2.00	6	17.33	1.21
Total	13	18.43	2.17	13	12.45	1.74

Results in Table 1 indicate that the visually impaired pupils who were exposed to goal setting strategy had an overall mean pre-test academic pressure score of 18.86 and standard deviation of 1.95, while the mean post-test academic pressure score was 7.57 with standard deviation of .53. The control group had overall mean pre-test of 18.00 and

standard deviation of 2.00, while the mean post-test academic pressure score was 17.33 with standard deviation of 1.21. The results in the table, therefore, seem to suggest that the treatment group had less academic pressure as evident in the mean post-test score.

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Table 2: Visually Impaired Pupils' Pre-test and Post-test (TS) Mean Scores on Academic Pressure

GROUPS	PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	SD	<i>n</i>	\bar{x}	SD
Time management	7	16.57	2.15	7	8.71	1.11
Control	6	18.00	2.00	6	17.33	1.21
Total	13	17.28	2.08	20	12.52	2.32

Results in Table 2 indicate that the visually impaired pupils who received instruction on time management strategy had an overall mean pre-test academic pressure score of 16.57 standard deviation 2.15, while the mean post-test academic pressure score was 8.71 with standard deviation of 1.11. The control group had overall mean pre-test of 18.00 and standard deviation of 2.00, while the mean post-test academic pressure score was 17.33 with standard deviation of 1.21. The results in the table, therefore,

seem to suggest that the treatment group had less academic pressure as showed in the mean post-test score.

Hypothesis 2

A corresponding hypothesis put to further address the research question is: Instruction on selected coping strategies will have no significant ($P < .05$) influence on the visually impaired pupils' academic pressure measured by their mean scores on **VIPO-ASQ**

Table 3

Summary of Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on the Visually Impaired Pupils' Post-test Scores on Academic Pressure of VIPO-ASQ

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Mean Square	Significance of F	Decision at .05 Level
Covariates	2.217	1	.217	.005	.946
Pre-test	2.217	1	.217	.005	.946

Main Effects

Goal setting

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Strategy	649.558	2	324.779	7.100	.005	*S
Time						
Management	649.558	2	324.779	7.100	.005	*S
Strategy						
Control						
Explained	649.996	3	216.605	4.738	.019	
Residual	731.804	16	45.738			
Total	1056.800	19	55.621			

*S = Significant .05 level

**NS = Not significant at .05 level

The results in Table 2 show that the treatment as a factor had significant influence on the visually impaired pupils' coping with academic pressure. This is because the F-value of 7.100 in respect of treatment as main factor has significant influence on the visually impaired pupils' coping with academic pressure. This is because of F-value of 7.100 in respect of treatment as main factor is shown to be significant. This seems to suggest that exposing the

visually impaired pupils to skills in Goal setting or Time management strategy, significantly eased off the academic pressure. As a consequence, the null hypothesis of no significant effect of treatment on the mean academic pressure scores is rejected.

To determine which of the two treatments caused the significant difference scheffe test is presented.

Table 4: Results of Scheffe Test for post-test VIPO-ASQ on Academic Pressure Mean Scores of the Treatment and Control

Group		1(GSS)	2TMS	3 Control
Mean(X)		7.57	8.71	17.33
Group	Mean(X)			
1 = GSS	7.57			
2 =TMS	8.71			
3 = Control	17.33	*	*	

* Denotes pairs of groups significant difference at 0.005 level

Table 4 shows that the difference between the treatment group one (GSS) and control group was significant at 0.05 level. The visually impaired pupils who received instruction in goal setting strategy had an overall mean of 7.57 as against control group that had an overall mean of 17.33. From the table. The difference between treatment group one (GSS) and control group was significant at .05 level.

The visually impaired pupils who were exposed to time management strategy had an overall mean of 8.71, while the control group had an overall mean score of 17.33. The difference between treatment group two(TMS) and control group was significant at .05.. The table further shows that the difference between treatment group one and treatment group two was not significant at .05. The visually impaired pupils exposed to goal setting had an overall mean of 7.57, while those visually impaired pupils who were instructed in time management had overall mean of 8.71. This implies that both strategies were regarded as being

equally effective in making less the academic pressure of the visually impaired.

Discussion

Results shown in table 1and 2 indicated that visually impaired pupils exposed to goal setting and time management strategy had each less academic pressure than the pupils in control. The results in the above tables were reinforced by the significant effect of the coping strategies on academic pressures of those instructed on the skills.

Goal setting and time management went a long way to ease off academic pressure in this study. The present study agrees with, Kabuga's (2003) study of blind student from India that was exposed to time management skills where he found out that the student learnt to use time on his study activities such that he could not be under any academic pressure.. The difference in scores of the visually impaired pupils who received treatment and those in the control could speak for themselves as evidenced in this study. .

The results of Scheffe test in Table 3 showed that goal setting strategy and time management were regarded as equally effective in coping with academic pressure. There was no significant difference in the effectiveness of the two coping strategies. The no significant difference in the effectiveness of the two coping strategies with academic pressure could be as a result of commitments of visually impaired pupils who were exposed to them on their skills. Another possible reason is that both strategies are equally good at helping in coping with this dimension of stress called academic pressure.

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn so far is that the exposure of the visually impaired pupils to the coping strategies (Goal setting and Time management strategies) significantly eased off their pressure oriented academic stress. By and large, attention to these coping strategies shall help in fulfilling the aims/ objectives of special education outlined in the National Policy on Education which shall serve as a way to realistic primary education for the visually impaired with hope to fulfill the dream of education for all. The problems of primary education for the visually impaired due to academic stress might have exciting prospects upon application of selected coping strategies by visually impaired pupils.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made.

1. The visually impaired pupils should be made to know by their teachers, parents and professionals, allied professionals and Para-professionals of special needs education that acquisition of these coping strategies is inevitable and indispensable for them to achieve actualization of selves
2. Much emphasis should be made towards exposing the visual impaired pupils to Goal setting and Time management coping strategies. This should be done by Teachers or Special Teachers and /or Guidance Counselors; that are knowledgeable on the subject matter.
3. It is important also that Teacher preparation institutions avail pre-service and in-service something to do with the visually impaired academic stress.
4. There should be seminars, workshops and conferences organized by federal and / or state ministry of Education. Special Educators and those in allied professions with focus on this subject matter of coping strategies on pressure oriented stress in such fora.
5. The writers of textbooks should be directed and encouraged by ministry of Education for works (books) on

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coping strategies of pressure oriented academic stress.

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6. Above all, these coping strategies should be incorporated into the curriculum of visually impaired pupils in primary schools

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