# Effects of Counseling in Curbing Persistent Lateness to School among University Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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*Abstract:*
*The non-equivalent control groups quasi-experimental design otherwise known as pretest-posttest control group quasi experimental design, investigated the effects of counseling in curbing persistent lateness to school among university secondary school students in Rivers State, in other to proffer a workable solution to one of the societal dilemmas plaguing our secondary schools. Four research questions and four corresponding hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study population was made up of 352 persistent latecomers in the 4 university owned secondary schools. The simple random sampling technique was used to draw 60 persistent latecomers from these schools. The 60 students (persistent latecomers) were placed into three treatments cum one control condition of 15 subjects each. The treatment (counseling) lasted for 5 weeks of 45 minutes each week as scheduled. Group I (ISS RSUST) received self management technique, Group 2 (ISS Uniport) received cognitive restructuring technique while Group 3 (8 students of ISS RSUST + 7 students of ISS Uniport) received a combination of self management + cognitive restructuring techniques. The control group was made up of 9 students from UDSS Uniport + 6 students from UOEDSS Ndele. The control group members were accorded no treatment. Questionnaire for persistent latecomers was used to collect data from the subjects. The reliability of QPLC was established using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to analyze the scores obtained in the test-retest reliability measure used and it yielded a coefficient of "r" 0.79 which was accepted to be strong. Data was analyzed using the independent t-test for the first 3 hypotheses and ANOVA for the 4th Hypothesis. Results showed positive significant effects of counseling in curbing persistent lateness to school among the 3 experimental groups that received counseling. Punctual school attendance significantly improved better among the 3 experimental groups than those in the controls group. Finally there was no statistical significant mean difference between the 3 experimental groups, no group was found to be more effective than the other. It was recommended among others that counselors, para-counselors, teachers and those in the helping profession be trained to use group counseling based on cognitive approaches to counseling to improve punctual and regular school attendance among secondary schools student.*

## 1. Introduction

Within the school system, especially the day schools lateness to school has been an age old problem. School administrators, teachers, parents and others have shown sincere concern about it. A lot of measures have been adopted to curb its occurrence. Students have been punished, flogged, sanctioned, talked to, yet it has persisted. In fact, because of its attendant effect, persistent lateness to school has been identified by educationists as one or the key factors responsible for poor performance among secondary school students (Mitchell, 1993). Stakeholders in the business of education like parents, teachers, administrators, government etc are continuously searching for that magic solution that will imbibe in students the attitude of being punctual and regular to school.

Lateness to school can be excused in some cases when the reasons are cogent and beyond the student's control. This can occur occasionally, but when it becomes persistent, it becomes a problem that cannot be over looked. Persistent lateness to school at the secondary school level if left unchecked will thwart the goals of secondary education as stipulated in section 5, of National Policy on education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). In specific terms, section 5, No.22 (e) of this policy states that secondary education shall "inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence". If this is expected, persistent lateness to school will in no way encourage the actualization of this specific objective. It is for this reason that Smith (1998) asserts that success of the school in carrying out its primary charge of educating and socializing students is contingent on students attending school punctually and regularly. This is to say that to benefit from the academic programme in its entirety students must be present in

school at the start of each day. This is an important factor in success (Rothmas, 2001). Research evidence corroborates this, indicating that there is a direct correlation between good attendance and students' achievement (Dekalb, 1999). Persistent lateness to school in the life of a young person if not checked may foreshadow more serious consequences in later adolescent or adult life (Van Breda, 2006).

Counseling service in one of the essential educational services recommended by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) in the National Policy on Education Section 11, 101 (J) to facilitate the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of the educational system.

Counseling therefore is one of the basic and essential services designed to accomplish this lofty goal. Students are to benefit from this essential service to enhance their academic performance and promote adaptive behaviour.

This study adopted two techniques of counseling drawn from the cognitive techniques derived from the cognitive learning theories. Cognitive learning stresses the structure of human behaviour. It contends that individual learning can only be interpreted in wholes, not in bits, and on the basis of insight, rather than trial and error. Cognitive learning believes that an individual who faces a problem situation can realistically solve it if he examines the various elements of the problem with a view to determining the best approach to the problem. The central thesis of cognitive learning is that, human beings realize from experience that goals can be attained based on planned behaviour and observation of cues (Essuman etal 1990). Of the many techniques under the cognitive school of thought, the researchers are specifically interested in self management and cognitive restructuring techniques.

Cognitive therapy aims at getting an individual to assume responsibility for his own decisions and actions. Self management represents a process of achieving this goal. Implicitly in this approach is the realization that circumstances are not always such that call for the establishment or monitoring of reinforcing contingencies by the behaviour modifier. A problem requiring modification may not be such overt character that calls for the direct involvement of a therapist. In addition the psychological climate may be such that the client acquires the intrinsic motivation which is required for behaviour modification. In such a situation, what is needed is that the client be schooled in a number of techniques which enable him to take control of his activities and acquire self-regulatory capacity. (Essuman et al 1992). Self management also implies joint formulation of goals by both counselor and client. In self – management, the therapist assumes a catalytic role which is designed to motivate the client to start a programme of change (Carkhuff 1971).

Cognitive restructuring technique on the other hand, attempts to teach a client how to reduce negative emotional reactions by getting him to interpret situations, with greater accuracy. The major task facing the therapist engaged in cognitive restructuring is how to modify the client's distorted perception of the world. An accurate interpretation of the realities of life, arise from the nature of the mental set which a person brings to his experience. If the dominant disposition is negative, reaction to human events cannot but be along such a line. The opposite is the case if the disposition is positive. It is assumed by therapist that ones interpretation of reality determines his emotional responses to it (Essuman et al 1992).

Regular and punctual school attendance is a priority for educators. A teacher will naturally be happy if all the students in a class are present at the commencement of the class, perhaps happier if none of the students come late to class at the commencement of the lesson.

This study investigates "the effects of counseling in curbing persistent lateness to school among students in university owned secondary schools in Rivers State. The goal is to identify intervention strategies through counseling that could have an impact on students' early attendance to school. Research conducted in this area could provide schools with vital information on how to curb lateness to school or manage it effectively through the tool of counseling. It is believed that with the instrument of counseling, this age long problem of persistent lateness to school could be addressed properly for students to make the best out of their educational endeavour. It is against this background that this study is conceived.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Lateness to school has been labeled as one of the major problems negatively affecting the future of our youth. Lateness to school is a form of behaviour that is a great concern to school administrators, teachers and parents. It is not just a school's problem or a problem of a particular state or country; it is an age long problem cutting across schools with a universal character. Viewing lateness to school from various points of view, it is obvious it cannot promote the progress of any society, it is better to stamp out its occurrence in our school system effectively. Research indicates that a student's performance is negatively impacted if they miss class even for 30 minutes of instructional time. Persistent lateness to school is a major concern when students are behind with their school work or when they are disruptive in any ongoing class by their presence. This may often affect the other learners in the classroom as well as the teacher. This is so because when students come to class late, it can disrupt the flow of a lecture or discussion, distract other students, impede learning and generally erode class morale. Moreover if left unchecked, lateness can become chronic and spread throughout the class because there are a number of possible reasons students arrive to class late. Among others; reasons range from heavy traffic situation, rising late from bed, leaving far from school, no transport fare, transportation difficulty etc However; understanding the reasons for lateness does not require tolerating the behaviour in our school. Mitchell, (1993) has this to say: "school is perceived as the key to success for individuals and to the excellence of society. Borrowing the words of Finn (1999), "Education is something that a decently functioning society obliges people to get a certain amount of, even if they don't really want to". For the betterment of our future leaders and the society at large, it is imperative to find a lasting solution to this age long problem in our educational system. With this in mind, this situation necessitated this study in a bid to finding lasting solution to this age long problem. The study will adopt cognitive therapy as a form of counseling which aims at altering maladaptive or unwanted behaviour patterns through the application of Behaviour modification principles derived from learning theories. The specific levels of techniques

of cognitive therapy that the researcher wants to adopt are self management and cognitive restructuring techniques. These counseling strategies will be applied in groups.

## 3. Purpose of Study
The main purpose of this study is to determine the effects of counseling in curbing persistent lateness to school among university secondary school students in Rivers State. Specifically the study is aimed at achieving the following, to;
- Determine the effectiveness of self management technique in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- Determine the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring technique in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- Determine the combined effects of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- Determine the most effective technique in curbing persistent lateness to school among self management, cognitive restructuring technique and a combination of both.

## 4. Significance of the Study
- Lateness to school has been a persistent problem in schools especially day schools.
- The result of this study could possibly prompt early development of intervention strategies in the area of improving students' regularity to school and inadvertently affecting school achievement.
- No doubt the results of this study will benefit practitioners in the fields of psychology and counseling, school administrators, teachers, students, parents and guardians.
- Psychologist and counselors through this study will come to terms with effective tools in helping persistent latecomers to adapt to punctual attitudes towards schooling through the instrument of counseling.
- School administrators through this study will know the importance of counseling within the school system. It will help them design effective educational programmes to meet the students' needs by giving counseling the pride of place it deserves in the scheme of things. This will to a large extent help students to be successful and productive citizens in the society.
- The findings of this study will alert secondary school heads, teachers and stakeholders in the education sector to the urgency of identifying latecomers early before it graduates to persist.
- Parents and guardians of persistent latecomers will be relieved to know that their children/wards can get help through the instrument of counseling. This will ginger them to encourage their children/wards to seek the services of the counselor in order to enhance their all round development.
- Through this study students will come to terms with the unquantifiable help they can get through the instrument of counseling. It will encourage them to continually seek the services of the counselor within the school system for their optimum development.
- Finally a thought provoking study of this nature will also pave way for further research, discussion and action.

## 5. Research Questions
The following research questions were framed to guide this study.
- How effective is self management technique in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students?
- How effective is cognitive restructuring technique in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students?
- How effective are the combined effects of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students?
- What is the most effective counseling method among self management, cognitive restructuring and a combination of both in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pretest and post test mean scores of students?

## 6. Hypotheses
Four corresponding hypotheses were postulated to give bearing to the study.
- $H_o1$: Self management technique has no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of experimental group (1) is compared to that of the control group (4).
- $H_o2$: Cognitive restructuring technique has no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the experimental group (2) is compared to that of the control group (4).
- $H_o3$: The combined effects of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques have no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the experimental group (3) is compared to that of the control group (4).
- $H_o4$: Self management, cognitive restructuring techniques and a combination of both have no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the three (3) experimental groups are compared.

## 7. Research Methodology

The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design.  This design is suitable for adoption to approximate conditions of true experiment in situations that do not permit the control and manipulation of all relevant variables (Kpolovie 2010).  Specifically the study made use of non-equivalent control groups Quasi-experimental design.  This design allows for results obtained from non-equivalent experimental and control groups to be validly compared.  It does this by the use of pretest and posttest as well as experimental and control groups that were not constituted by random assignment of the subjects.

| Groups | Pretest | Treatment | Post-test |
|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group 1(Self management technique) | 01 | $x_1$ | 02 |
| Experimental Group 2 (Cognitive restructuring technique) | 03 | $x_2$ | 04 |
| Experimental Group 3 (Combination of SM & CR techniques) | 05 | $x_3$ | 06 |
| Control Group 4(No counseling) | 07 | - | 08 |

Table 1: Diagrammatic representation of design
Pretest-Posttest Control Group Quasi-Experimental Design
Key; X represents treatment (counseling)

- Represents No Treatment
  The persistent latecomers were exposed to four experimental conditions and were given treatment (counseling) that involved either a single model procedure i.e. self management technique or cognitive restructuring technique or a combination of both and absence of treatment for the control group.

| Group Counseling | Time | No of Clients | Counseling days | Session | Duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group 1 ( ISS RSUST) Self Management | 1.30pm – 2.15pm | 15 | Fridays | 5 sessions of 45minutes per week | 5 weeks |
| Group2  (ISS UNIPORT) Cognitive restructuring | 10.30am – 11.15am | 15 | Tuesday | 5 sessions of 45 minutes per week | 5 weeks |
| Group 3 (ISS RSUST +ISS UNIPORT) Combination of self management and cognitive restructuring | 3.00pm – 3.45pm | 15 | Wednesdays | 5 session of 45 minutes per week | 5 weeks |
| Group 4 Control Group | | 15 | No Treatment | | |

Table 2: Treatment Schedule

Counseling was done in a group setting.  Basic ingredients essential to ensure a group's productivity were well established such as Trust and acceptance, Empathy and caring, Hope for success, freedom to experiment, commitment to change/intimacy, catharsis, cognitive restructuring, self disclosure, confrontation and feedback.  Counseling was given to the various groups as scheduled above.  Counseling session was terminated at the $6^{th}$ week.

 The area of study covered 3 Local Government Areas in Rivers State, Port Harcourt, Obio-Akpor and Emuohia Local Government Areas where the University Secondary Schools are sited.  These schools are;

- International Secondary School, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.
- International Secondary School, University of Port Harcourt in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.
- University Demonstration Secondary School, (UDSS) University of Port Harcourt in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area.
- University of Education Demonstration Secondary School (UOEDSS) Ndele in Emuohia Local Government Area of Rivers State.

The target population for the study consisted of all the persistent latecomers (students) in all the university secondary schools in Rivers State numbering four (4) schools with a total of 352 persistent late comers all of which are day students (source: Labour masters from the various schools).

The simple random sampling technique was used to draw 60 members for the study with the aid of a table of random numbers.    The 60 members were placed into four groups of 15 subjects each:  3 experimental groups and one control group not randomly. ISS RSUST formed group 1, ISS UNIPORT formed group 2, ISS RSUST + ISS UNIPORT formed group 3, UDSS UNIPORT and UOEDSS NDELE with fewer number of subjects formed the control group.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers named Questionnaire for persistent latecomers (Q'PLC) which was content validated by experts in tests and measurement.

The test-retest type of reliability was employed to ascertain the reliability of the instrument.  The instrument was administered on 15 persistent latecomers outside the university secondary schools in Rivers State, precisely latecomers from the public schools twice.  The interval between the first and second administration was two weeks.  The Pearson product moment correlation was employed to

find the relationship between the two sets of scores (the 1st and 2nd administration). This gave a co-efficient value of "r" 0.79 which was accepted to be strong for utilization (Isangedighi et al 1992).

The instrument was personally administered by the researchers with the help of an assistant.

The pre-test was administered on the 60 persistent late comers after the formation of all the four groups. 100% retrieval rate was recorded as it was filled and returned on the spot in a well conducive testing environment in each school. The post-test was administered after the counseling schedule as stipulated on table 3.1. The interval between the first and second administration was five (5) weeks (1 months +) 100% retrieval rate was also recorded.

In scoring the instrument, the minimum score a student could get was 20 and the maximum score was 80, thus a pupil who had a score of 30 and below, could not manage self effectively and have a poor cognitive reasoning towards lateness to school and a student with a score of 35 and above had better cognitive reasoning, this score indicated that the student was ready for a change.

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation of the pretest and post-test mean scores where the mean scores of the experimental and control groups were compared. For hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 t-test was used to compare the significance of the difference between the post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups.

The one way analysis of variance was also used to determine the significance of the difference of the post-test mean scores of the three experimental groups 1, 2, 3, (self management, cognitive restructuring and a combination of both).

## 8. Data Presentation and Results

Data collected were organized, analyzed and presented in a tabular form to answer the research questions and also test the null hypotheses formulated for this research.

- Research Question 1
  How effective is self management technique in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students?
- Data answering this research question is contained in table 1.

| Pre-Test Mean Scores | | | | Post-Test Mean Scores | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | Differences | |
| | | | | | | | ($\bar{X}$) | Sd |
| Self Management Experimental Group 1 | 15 | 33.8 | 8.67 | 15 | 39.6 | 6.99 | 5.8 | 1.68 |

*Table 3: Analysis and comparison of persistent latecomers in Group 1 (Self Management) pretest and post test mean score*

The result on table 1 shows that self management experimental group 1 had a mean ($\bar{x}$) score of 33.8 and standard deviation of 8.67 before exposure to counseling (self management techniques). After being exposed to self management techniques of counseling the mean ($\bar{x}$) score for the post test showed a mean ($\bar{x}$) of 39.6 and a standard deviation of 6.99. This means self management technique is effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State. The difference of 5.8 between the first and second score shows the gains of counseling.

The answer to research question 1therefore is, self management group method of counseling is very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.

- Research Question 2
  How effective is cognitive restructuring technique in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students?
- Data answering this research question is contained in table 2.

| Pretest Mean Scores | | | | Post-Test Mean Scores | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | Differences | |
| | | | | | | | ($\bar{X}$) | sd |
| Cognitive Restructuring Experimental Group 2 | 15 | 33.6 | 9.76 | 15 | 46.9 | 7.28 | 13.3 | 2.48 |

*Table 4: Analysis and comparison of Persistent Latecomers in Experimental Group 2 (Cognitive restructuring) pretest and post test mean scores*

The result on table 2 shows that cognitive restructuring experimental group 2 had a mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 33.6 and standard deviation of 9.76 before exposure to counseling, (cognitive restructuring technique). After being exposed to cognitive restructuring technique of counseling the post test showed an improved mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 46.9 and standard deviation of 7.28. This means cognitive

restructuring is also gainful in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.  The difference of 13.3 between the first and second score (pretest and post-test scores) show the gains of counseling.

The answer to research question 2 is, cognitive restructuring group method of counseling is very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers state.

- Research Question 3
  How effective are the combined effects of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pre-test and post-test mean scores of students.
- Data answering this research question is contained in table 3.

| Pretest Mean Scores | | | | Post-Test Mean Scores | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | Differences | |
| | | | | | | | ($\bar{X}$) | sd |
| Combination Group: Self Management and Cognitive Restructuring  Experimental Group 3 | 15 | 31.6 | 8.03 | 15 | 51.6 | 4.96 | 20 | 3.07 |

*Table 5: Analysis and comparison of Pretest and Post Test mean scores of Persistent Latecomers in Experimental Group 3 combination of Self Management and Cognitive Restructuring*

The result on table 3 shows that the group exposed to a combination of self management and cognitive restructuring experimental group 3 had a mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 31.6 and standard deviation of 8.03 before exposure to counseling (self management and cognitive restructuring techniques). After exposure to these 2 techniques the post-test showed an improved mean ($\bar{X}$) score of 51.6 and standard deviation of 4.96.  This means a combination of self management and cognitive restructuring technique is very gainful in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.  The mean ($\bar{X}$) difference of 20 between the pretest and post test scores shows the gains of counseling.

The answer to research question 3 is, a combination of self management and cognitive restructuring technique is also very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.

- Research Question 4
  What is the most effective counseling method among self management, cognitive restructuring and a combination of both in curbing persistent lateness to school as measured by pretest and post test mean scores of students.
- Data answering this research question is contained in table 4.

| Pretest Mean Scores | | | | Post-Test Mean Scores | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group | N | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | n | ($\bar{X}$) | sd | Differences | |
| | | | | | | | ($\bar{X}$) | sd |
| Experiment Group 1 (SM) | 15 | 33.6 | 8.67 | 15 | 39.6 | 6.99 | 5.8 | 1.68 |
| Experiment Group 2 (CR) | 15 | 33.6 | 9.76 | 15 | 46.9 | 7.28 | 13.3 | 2.48 |
| Experiment Group 3 combined group (SM/CR) | 15 | 31.6 | 8.03 | 15 | 51.6 | 4.96 | 20 | 3.07 |

*Table 6: Analysis and comparison of the pre-test, post test mean scores of all the 3 experimental groups, Self management, cognitive restructuring and combination of the two*

Table 4 revealed the gains obtained from all the counseling groups.  The post-test mean scores for all the experimental groups improved above the pre-test mean ($\bar{X}$) scores obtained before their exposure to counseling.  The difference obtained in each group shows the gains of counseling in all the groups.  The differences of 5.8, 13.3 and 20 not with standing all the counseling groups were very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.

The answer to research question 4 is, all the counseling techniques employed in this study were very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State.

## 9. Testing of Hypotheses

- Hypotheses 1
  Self management technique have no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of experimental group (1) is compared to that of the control group

- Data verifying the above hypothesis are contained in table 5.

| Group | N | ($\bar{X}$) | Sd | Se | P | df | t-cal | t-crit | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group 1 (SM) | 15 | 39.6 | 6.99 | | | | | | Reject HO (Result Significant) |
| Control Group | 15 | 30 | 5.59 | 5.33 | 0.05 | 28 | 4.17 | 2.048 | |

*Table 7: Summary of t-test analysis on the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of*
*Experimental group 1 and control group*
*Result significant at 0.05 levels*

Table 5 shows hypothesis testing of the means which revealed that the calculated t-test value of 4.17 is higher than the critical t-value (table value) of 2.048 at 28 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance; this call for the rejection of Ho and the acceptance of H1. It therefore suggest that the mean difference between the experimental group 1 (group exposed to self management technique) and the control group is statistically significant, the null hypothesis of no significant effect of self management technique in curbing persistence lateness to school is rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained.

- Hypothesis 2
  Cognitive restructuring technique have no significant effect in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the experimental group (2) is compared to that of the control group
- Data verifying the above hypothesis are contained in table 6.

| Group | N | ($\bar{X}$) | Sd | Se | P | df | t-cal | t-crit | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group 1 (CR) | 15 | 46.9 | 7.28 | | | | | | Reject H.O (Result Significant) |
| Control Group | 15 | 30 | 5.59 | 5.61 | 0.05 | 28 | 7.16 | 2.048 | |

*Table 8: Summary of t-test analysis on the significant difference between the post-test mean scores of*
*Experimental group 2 (CR) and control group*
*Result is significant at 0.05*

Result in table 6 clearly shows the calculated t-test value of 7.16 to be higher than the table value of t (tcritical value) of 2.048 with a degree of freedom of 28 at 0.05 level of significance. This call for the rejection of the null hypothesis Ho and the acceptance of the research hypothesis H1 (alternate hypothesis). This implies that the statistical difference is significant between group 2 counseled with cognitive restructuring and the control group which received no counseling. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant effect of cognitive restructuring technique in curbing persistent lateness to school is rejected and the alternate is accepted.

- Hypothesis 3
  The combined effects of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques have no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the experimental group (3) is compared to that of the control group.
- Data verifying the above hypothesis are contained in table 7.

| Group | N | ($\bar{X}$) | Sd | Se | P | df | t-cal | t-crit | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group 3 (SM & CR) | 15 | 51.6 | 4.96 | | | | | | Reject H.O (Result Significant) |
| Control Group | 15 | 30 | 5.59 | 3.72 | 0.05 | 28 | 11.25 | 2.048 | |

*Table 9: Summary of t-test analysis on the significant difference between posttest mean scores of*
*Experimental group 3 SM/CR and control group*
*Result significant at 0.05 levels*

Table 7 hypothesis testing of the means showed the calculated t-test value to be 11.25 and the critical t value to be 2.048 at 28 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-test value is higher than the critical t-test value, the null hypothesis of no significant effects in the combined effects of SM/CR in curbing persistent lateness to school is rejected and the alternate hypothesis retained.

- Hypothesis 4
  Self management, cognitive restructuring techniques and a combination of both have no significant effects in curbing persistent lateness to school when the post-test mean scores of the three (3) experimental groups are compared.
- Data verifying the above hypothesis are contained in table 8.

| Source of Variance | Sum of squares SS | Df | Mean square MS | P | Calculated f-ratio | critical f-value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 1097.78 | k-1 3-1 = 2 | 548.89 | 0.05 | -20.96 | 3.22 | Accept Ho (Result not significant) |
| Within Groups | -1099.86 | n-k 45-3 = 42 | -26.18 | | | | |

*Table 10: Summary of Anova on the significant difference between the Post Test mean scores of the 3 Experimental groups; SM, CR, SM/CR*
*Result is not significant at 0.05 levels*

The result on table 8 shows that the value for the between groups sum of squares is 1097.78 and for the within groups sum of squares to be – 1099.86. The mean square between groups is 548.89 and the mean square within groups is - 26.18. The calculated f-ratio value is – 20.96 at 2 and 42 degree of freedom. The calculated f value of – 20.96 is far less than the critical f value of 3.22 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus the null hypothesis of no significant effects in the 3 techniques SM, CR and a combination of both in curbing persistent lateness to school is retained and the alternate hypothesis rejected.
This suggests that the mean difference between the three experimental groups is statistically not significant.

## 10. Discussion of Findings
In relation to the research questions, the study revealed that persistent latecomers in the university owned schools in Rivers State had a poor attitude towards lateness to school as revealed in the pretest results shown side by side with the posttest scores on tables 1, 2, 3 and 4. Attitude towards lateness to school improved tremendously after exposure to treatment (counseling) as revealed by the post-test mean scores of the same tables. This means counseling with the techniques of self management and cognitive restructuring and a combination of the two was very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school. This result is inline with the findings of Olta and Odoemelam (1999) who used Rational Emotive Therapy (cognitive restructuring) and client centred approach in improving self concept among physically handicapped secondary school students in Afikpo Urban of Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State with RET experimental group improving above the control group.

### 10.1. Self Management Experimental Group 1 vs Control
The result on table 5 revealed that there was indeed, a significant statistical difference between those counseled with self management technique and those in the control group that received no counseling. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate retained. This finding implied that self management technique of counseling was very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State. The outcome of this study is in consonance with the findings of Ellis (1957) who conducted an experiment with the use of closed case files using 16 cases from psychoanalysis, 78 from psychoanalytic psychotherapy and 78 RET (cognitive Therapy). His result showed that those counseled with cognitive therapy of RET improved above others.

### 10.2. Cognitive restructuring experimental group 2 Vs control group.
The result on table 6 showed that there was a notable statistical significance difference between those counseled with cognitive restructuring technique and those in the control group who received no counseling. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. This finding implied that cognitive restructuring is an effective counseling technique in curbing persistent lateness to school among students of university owned secondary schools in Rivers State. This study is in agreement with the findings of East man et al (2007) who conducted a survey on wincosin students school attendance and discovered that the best way to monitor school attendance appears to work best through a single adult guide which includes a counselor who communicated that they care about and believe in the ability of the student to curb the problem. Those who worked with counselors achieve a higher level of school attendance.

### 10.3. Combined Experimental Group (3) of SM/CR vs Control Group
The result on table 7 showed that there was also a statistical difference between the experimental group 3 and the control group. Thus the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis. This implies that a combination of SM/CR techniques is very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school.
This finding agreed with the finding of Railsback (2004) who used REBT and associated cognitive therapies on older children and adolescents using 38 treatment groups involving cognitive/cognitive behaviour therapy and found an average effect size of 067 i.e. a moderately large impact over the control group. Thus counselors and professional in the helping profession should use the combined techniques of self management and cognitive restructuring in group setting.

*10.4. Self Management Vs Cognitive Restructuring Vs SM/CR*

The result on table 8 showed that there was no significant mean difference between those counseled with self management, cognitive restructuring and those in the combination group of both (SM/CR) thus the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that all the treatment (counseling) groups were effective; none was more effective than the other. This study is in line with the findings of Iyous and woods 1991 in Prochaska and Norcross (2007) who examined the effectiveness of RET/REBT as cognitive based theories with various disorders and population. The result showed no general difference in outcome among behaviour therapy; cognitive behaviour Modification and Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy.

These results are not surprising as most studies conducted with cognitive therapy based techniques in group settings have always shown remarkable improvement over control groups and other therapeutic groups. That is to say counselors and others in the helping profession should adopt cognitive based techniques in group settings when dealing with secondary school students.

## 11. Implication for Counseling

The findings of this study have significant implication for counselors in the society. Counseling contributes positively towards behaviour change and we are in a society where only few schools can boast of counselors while the number of students who need counseling is high. Teachers, administrators, stake holders in education are continuously looking for a magic ward to curb unacceptable behaviours in schools. Counselors in the state under the umbrella of counseling association of Nigeria (CASSON) can organize a community project for secondary schools in the state to help students curb unacceptable bahaviour patterns moving from school to school and on specific days and time to salvage our schools from the dilemma of lateness to school and other unacceptable behaviours.

Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should work in harmony with government and other stake holders in the education sector to advocate the employment of counselors at all levels of education.

Teacher counselors who currently perform guidance functions in schools can be taught the techniques of self management and cognitive restructuring by members of the Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) through organized seminars and workshops.

Finally all school heads, teachers, prefects etc should recognize the importance of counseling and refer cases of unacceptable behaviours to the counselor where they exist to curb persistent lateness to school and other unacceptable behavioural patterns.

## 12. Conclusion

From the foregoing research, we can make the following conclusions;
- Persistent latecomers in the experimental group 1 counseled with self management technique improved significantly above their counterparts in the control group. This means, self management technique is an effective tool in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- Persistent latecomers in the experimental group 2 counseled with cognitive restructuring technique significantly improved above those in the control group who received no counseling. This implies that cognitive restructuring technique is another effective tool in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- Those in the experimental group 3 counseled with a combination of self management and cognitive restructuring techniques improved significantly over their counterparts in the control group. This indicates that a combination of the 2 techniques is very effective in curbing persistent lateness to school.
- All the counseling approaches adopted in this study were effective in bringing about behavioural change. None was more effective than the other in improving persistent lateness to school among secondary school students in university owned schools in Rivers State.

## 13. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that;

Every school in the country both public and private should have at least a practicing guidance counselor, who will help address the unacceptable behavioural patterns of students such as lateness to school. These behaviours if not well address will hinder the progress of the students and that will be a major setback for our educational progress. Counselors with such responsibilities should be relief of their teaching task and other administrative responsibilities to get an optimum result in practice.

Teachers, school administrators, parents etc should always refer latecomers to the school counselor so that they will not progress to persistent latecomers. In the same vein persistent latecomers should be specially identified by the school authority and be referred to the appropriate quarters for special attention.

Schools that lack professional guidance counselors should send teachers or para-counselors to special workshops and trainings where they could be trained in techniques of self management and cognitive restructuring to help students who exhibit such behaviours.

Facilities of education in colleges of education and universities should organize short term programmes for teachers and other school personnel on how to tackle students with unacceptable behaviours such as lateness to school, This will reduce most of the unacceptable behaviours exhibited by students in our secondary schools.

Finally it is hoped that professionals in the helping relationships such as psychologist, social workers, psychiatrist etc will have enough information to assist students with problem behaviours.

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