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Perceptions of Work Value and Ethical Practices Amongst Primary School Teachers, Demographics, Intervention, and Impact

Moses Onyemaechi Ede [ID] **and Chinedu Ifedi Okeke**
School of Education Studies, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Friday Adene
Department of Educational Foundations University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Anthony C. Areji
Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract
The rate of value decadence and degeneration of moral value as it applies to work ethic amongst teachers is worrisome, especially in Nigeria. This value decadence amongst Nigerian teachers could have been triggered off as a result of their false perceptions in placing demands. This study therefore investigated the effect of rational emotive occupational intervention on the perceptions of work value and ethical

Corresponding Author:
Moses Onyemaechi Ede, School of Education Studies, Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.
Email: edeh.mo@ufs.ac.za

practices amongst teachers in primary schools in Nigeria. Randomized group control intervention was adopted with 168 primary school teachers selected as participants for this study. The participants were allocated to (treatment group: n = 84) and (waitlisted control group: n = 84). The participants in the treatment group received a 12-week program of activities (REBOI) whereas the waitlisted group received the conventional means of counseling. The results showed that rational emotive behavioural occupational intervention was significant in the work values of primary school teachers in Nigeria as measured by the Organizational Values Scale . Rational emotive occupational intervention was significant in the ethical sensitivity of primary school teachers in Nigeria as measured by the Ethical Sensitivity Scale. It was also found that rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention has significant long-term effects on work value and ethical practices among primary school teachers in Nigeria as measured by the Organizational Values Scale, Ethical Sensitivity Scale. Therefore, we conclude that rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention is effective in changing the false perceptions of work value and ethical practices among primary school teachers in Nigeria.

Introduction

Values, whether internally or externally generated, are important in every individual life as well as among employees in any established organization. Values are related to the human needs and their desire in achieving any set goals in their life (Rokeach, 1973). Values also play an important role in the concepts and beliefs people hold that will affect their emotions and attitudes that guide the selection and assessment of human behaviour (Ucanok, 2008).

Value as a concept has different dimensions, springing from the views of philosophers and psychologists. Some scholars in philosophy believe that value is intrinsic, objective, absolute and with a hierarchy or otherwise referred to as the deontology approach (Osaat &Omordu, 2011). Other scholars of philosophy believe that value is extrinsic, subjective, relative, and without hierarchy and such a class of group is referred to as the teleological approach (Osaat & Omordu, 2011). For deontological approach, people valued materials because the material has special substances and qualities that attract people regardless of time and situation. With regard to the teleological approach, no phenomena would have values if there were no human beings to value them.

Based on the psychologist's view, values are an integral aspect of an individual's personality that underlies and motivates decisions and behavior. The

psychologists perceived value preferences as personal differences that allow the all-encompassing portrayal of the human being. Values may be portrayed as principal demeanors directing our mental forms and behavior. In the field of positive psychology, it is difficult to do without values because values create a belief that life is significant and serves as a degree of how important one's activities are; that is, how reliable a person's state of value system is (Monk, 2018). In any case, values impact feelings that could help or destroy a teacher in his workplace (Halama, 2007).

It is because of the importance of value in an educational setting that Bloom et al. (1974) classified value as the highest level of the affective domain. Values have been an enduring interest amongst educational experts, namely educational administrators and philosophers . Willower (1994) further indicated that this is because value is the central determinant factor of human disposition to action. Thus, to illustrate further, if a person has a positive work value for his career, future, and the world at large, such a person is likely to be productive and efficient in his work life. In the same manner, for any established organization to flourish (including the educational institution) such an organization must have positive characteristics of work values to ensure commitment, accountability, achievement, and goal-oriented (Atchison, 2007; Elango et al., 2010). In an established organization, work values become an interesting contrast as they determine the beliefs an employee have that will certainly determine the quality of output (Ying & Aaron, 2010).

Work values are one of the subsets of overall human values (Liu & Lei, 2012). Work values act as common values that are always being discussed relating to the employee's development and achievement in their workplace (Krishnan & Mary, 2012). In organizations, work values can function as evaluative standards that people use to interpret their work experiences and determine the meaning that individuals attribute to work, jobs, organizations, specific events and conditions (Ucanok, 2008). The impact of work values on work-related attitudes becomes an interesting topic among researchers (Chin-Chih, 2006). Previous literature reviewing on work values have given different understandings and definitions in trying to give a detail explanation of the concept as regard to employees like teachers in organizations. Super (1990) enumerated 15 dimensions of work values that had been identified based on the Work Values Inventory which are: altruism, aesthetics, creativity, intellectual stimulation, achievement, independence, prestige, management, economic returns, security, surrounding, supervisory relations, association, way of life and variety. Thereafter, other researchers re-categorized these 15 dimensions of work values into three categories namely; intrinsic (terminal values), extrinsic (instrumental values) and concomitant values (Robinson & Betz, 2008).

However, some of the researchers argued that there are only two common types of work values among employees, which are intrinsic and extrinsic work

values (Chin-Chih, 2006). Thus, in this study the researchers explore the work values based on these two dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic work values.

Intrinsic work values: Intrinsic (terminal) values refer to the level, degree or extent to which an individual enhances his or her personal growth, explores his or her external talent, enhances creativity, and improves quality of work life (Chin-Chih, 2006). Intrinsic work values also refer to the interplay of individual traits or internal factor that gives a sense of self-actualization gained from working, contributing to society and having meaningful work (Parboteeah et al., 2009). Intrinsic work values directly express the employee's openness to change their values that related to the pursuit of autonomy, interest, growth, and creativity in work. Intrinsic work value might engender employees to seek out challenging tasks that allow them to develop new skills and enhance values that satisfy their needs and desires in life.

Extrinsic work values: Extrinsic (instrumental) values refer to the level of significance one tries to obtain, the level of excellence in his or her social interaction, getting a harmonious social relationship, freedom and how one tries to achieve a balance between services within the organizational systems. It also involved the degree an environment tries to fulfill their sense of security and maintain their needs while in their workplace (Chin-Chih, 2006). Furthermore, in the views of Parboteeah et al. (2009) they opined that, external values are values that focuses on external outcomes relating to peoples' jobs which include the benefit accrued from work, work security and low demanding work. In the words of Ali and Panatik (2013), such demands become obvious as some teachers, as employees, sometimes try to satisfy their extrinsic values of work needs, such as job security and income allowances, be provided by the organization with the requirements needed for general security and maintenance of order in their lives. Such people's attitudes to work tend to be the evaluative positions toward the organizational core values that shape the employees' perception and decisions in their workplace (Schleicher et al., 2011).

Regrettably, teachers opt for these negative work values because they believe that teachers in Nigeria have less social dignity (Abiogu et al., 2021). Nigerian teachers show more of these extrinsic values that attract negative values in their workplace by engaging in unethical practices that have worsened the value system in Nigerian schools (Okpachui et al., 2015; Segun & Ajani, 2015). In justifying the value decay in Nigerian schools Okpachui et al. (2015) opined that a good number of teachers do not have positive work values as they have resorted to see idleness as their operational core values (Okpachui et al., 2015). This was supported by the study done by Oghuvbu (2001) whose finding was that teachers believe absenteeism from school, skipping lesson(s), lateness to school, and non-preparation and inadequate preparation of lesson notes are a means of striking back at their employers. These types of behaviours are born out of the quest for extrinsic values by teachers in Nigerian schools which could imbibe negative work values in them, because they believe that they have less

social dignity. Some researchers in Nigeria have indicated that the ethical standard enshrined in the Nigeria school system has been flouted by teachers for the past three decades as they have been found engaging in immoral acts, indiscipline, absenteeism from work and other illicit practices (Arop et al., 2018; Igwe, 1997; Ngoziukegbu et al., 2016; Obunanim, 1993). All in all, teachers generally share a negative attitude to work, in that they have decided not to keep and appreciate the work ethics required of them (Ngoziukegbu et al., 2016). Recent studies also found that teachers have an unethical attitude towards work (Arop et al., 2018; Ngoziukegbu et al., 2016). The shortfalls of ethical practices by teachers in Nigeria is as a result of irrational beliefs triggered by stress which often makes them late to their duty posts; engage in physical and sexual harassment; inability to complete school records such as diaries, registers, and student results (Arop et al., 2018; Owan & Agunwa, 2019).

These practices have continually threatened the primary school system in Nigeria and there is no doubt that these negative attitudes and unethical practices impact negatively on the educational system of the country (Oghuvbu, 2001). It is because values form the basis upon which ethics can be built that makes an individual to put on a negative value towards work or attitude to work and ethical practices that could be negatively affected (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015). Omisore and Adeleke further explained that work ethics is the standard rule of human conduct, normative practices, and acceptable behaviours by any professional organization. Indeed, work ethics is the social and professional standard that regulates an employee's attitudes and conduct in an organization (Cieciuch et al., 2015).

The Nigeria Teachers Service Manual highlights the ethics of the teaching profession as follows: teachers should dress modestly; live within their means and avoid financial embarrassment; be punctual to school and classes; should not be absent from school without the express permission of the principal/headmaster; should not exploit their students; neither take bribes nor engage in corruption of any form; not have carnal knowledge or indecent relationship with students; not reveal examination questions whether internal or external to anyone; and not take any form of alcoholic drinks during school hours.

Just like work value, work ethics is intrinsic. Therefore, value and ethics are linked to the way people think. Available literature has shown a positive relationship between value, thought, and action (Jensen, 2003). Allport and Vernon noted that value is a unique characteristic that forms human personality (Cieciuch et al., 2015). The relationship between values, belief systems, and behaviors is demonstrated by Cieciuch et al. (2015). Allport and Vernon (1931) established that value is both an interest and evaluative attitude that is linked to the way people think.

Such thinking pattern has led Nigeria teachers to cultivate feelings of inferiority complex compared to other professions such as medicine, nursing, law, and engineering (Agulanna, 2001; Oghuvbu, 2001). As a result of such

perceptions associated with their profession some teachers are predisposed to psychological problems namely; stress, burnout, negative self-esteem, and anxiety (Agulanna, 2001; Njoku, 2011). According to Njoku (2011) these psychological problems could be associated with the value system. This means that the teachers with maladaptive beliefs about the teaching profession can hardly discharge their basic duties (Njoku, 2011). Njoku further explained that such teachers could be vulnerable to anti-social and undesirable values, because the situation of such teachers may end up inculcating negative values to students under their watch as well as devaluing teacher's status and commitment to duty which could lead to stress.

Experiencing positive stress could lead to optimum productivity and actualization of the teachers' potentials (Ellis & Wildle, 2002). However, if the workload balance goes beyond the threshold, perhaps it becomes uneasy to control, it may lead to psychological and physiological challenges to the teacher (Romas & Sharma, 2004). Thus, stress in the workplace becomes a basic and important issue that contributes to poor attitude to work, absenteeism, and poor performance among employees (Lazarus et al., 2009). Excellent teachers have a desirable working value system to ensure that a culture of excellence is created in students. No employer would want to employ staff with negative and unacceptable work values. But every employer wants to employ, maintain and sustain well-informed and skilled workers with good values and ethics (Kraska, 1991). It is virtually difficult to learn and to appreciate good values and ethics within a short period (Omisore & Adeleke, 2015). Therefore, the value of work is a vital for the overall value system in organizational work culture. If the working values of teachers are congruent with the institutional core values, the overall outputs may be seriously improved (Azians Abu, 2006; Mohd Nor, 2004). This is true in the workplace if such employees are exposed to any psychological or clinical interventions (Simon et al., 2001).

Past studies suggest that rational-emotive behavioral therapy (REBT) approaches be employed for employees with occupational stress and work deviant behaviours (Nwokeoma et al., 2019; Ogba et al., 2019). The application of REBT is supported because highly stressed teachers have illogical and unhealthy patterns of thinking about their personality; they hold negative beliefs about the high work demands they experience, which are concomitant with high stress and which may significantly exacerbate stress (Bernard, 2016). When this occurs, previous literature recommends that REBT interventions to be used for such populations in an organizational setting (Nwokeoma et al., 2019; Ogba et al., 2019; Palmer and Gyllensten, 2008). This is because the organizational core and shared value set enables people to live as one in relative peace (Snyder, 2000). Ethically, it is difficult for a teacher to be exonerated from the shared work value in the teaching profession, just to accommodate personal value (Vyskocilova et al., 2015).

Primarily, cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBTs) target life goals by changing faulty cognitive processes, behaviour, and emotional responses. These changes are often referred to as changes in work values (Vyskocilova et al., 2015). For example, a teacher who is confused by their thinking and emotions is likely to face terrible emotions and thus become a victim of negative work value in the work environment. This shows the relationship between work value and behavior. However, whether the correlation between value, cognition, and behaviour is positive or negative, we argue that it has considerable implications for institutional goals, teaching, and learning. Similarly, Ellis (1962) perceived thought, belief, attitude, and behaviour as products of cognition. Ellis further proposed that human beings have three basic areas of emotion-bio-psychosocial behaviour; implying that an individual is born to grow, establish life goals, and make preferences (value). The individual's value is nurtured and propagandized through parents and the society at large, but some individuals will not adhere to the value expected of them by society. Ellis's position here is that an individual has an innate tendency to accept the societal notion of value or not; that is, the interplay among human biology, psychology, and the social environment. Even with this long-standing interest, work values in the school environment have not been empirically explored much using the interventional approach, particularly the rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention (REBOI).

Previous studies have attested positively to the efficacy and relevance of REBT in the occupational field of study (e.g., Ogbuanya et al., 2017); however, the present study did not totally share same assumptions. REBOI is an extension of REBT developed by. The fundamental principles and assumptions of REBOI are as follows: (1) misplaced perceptions of work demands by teachers are responsible for their unethical behaviour practice in workplace; (2) teachers with irrational ways of thinking about themselves, their work, and their future manifest deviant behaviors in their workplace; (3) when teachers are preoccupied with negative value towards work, the teacher's attitude towards ethical practices in the workplace will be maladaptive; (4) sharing general negative attitude to work leads to poor evaluation of the work ethics; (5) teachers attitudes to work is behavioural; therefore, teachers' maladaptive functioning is due to negative behavioral interpretations of work values and ethical practices.

This study adopted the ABCDE approach by Ellis in inculcating REBOI into the workplace setting. This implies that the REBOI approach adopts the principles of REBT of ABCDE into the work setting. The "A" stands for activating event that occurs in the workplace. It stands as the process of assigning of roles by the boss to his subordinates. It may also be perceived as job demands and hopes in the work-life which some teachers most times think is the cause of their dissatisfaction (David et al., 2005). The "B" represents beliefs that showcased the employee's perceptions, visualization, and conceptualization about the events (Dryden, 1999). It is conceptualized in this study as those fundamental values and ethical conducts expected of teachers to observe and adhere to and

which are most likely to be perceived rationally or irrationally. Further, in the context of this study, B entails the beliefs held by teachers about self, other employees/students/customers, and/or fundamental values of the organization. Holding flexible or healthy beliefs about job demands and ethical practice leads to goal actualization. But if the beliefs are rigid, unhealthy, and absolute, it could lead to poor productivity and inefficiency. Irrational thoughts and beliefs include those indicators and sources that expose an employee to distress and consequently leads to psychological disorders such as anxiety and mood swings (David et al., 2008). Previous research works have categorized irrational beliefs into four, namely: demandingness (e.g. "My boss must respect me at all times" and "Work environment must be conducive at all times"); awfulizing (e.g. "It's awful if my boss does not respect me"), low frustration tolerance (e.g. "I can't stand when my boss does not respect me"), and global evaluation (e.g. "Life is bad if my boss does not respect me") (DiGiuseppe et al., 2012; DiLorenzo et al., 2007; Dryden & Ellis, 2003; Ellis & Dryden, 1997). The letter "C" represents consequences, indicating unhealthy and inappropriate emotional consequences as well as behavioral consequences. The assumption, therefore, is that C is the psychological outcome of irrational beliefs. The letter "D" in this study represents dispute and seeks to replace the fundamental beliefs with flexible beliefs that could lead to adaptive behaviors and functional emotions (Ellis & Dryden, 1997).

Following the assumptions of ABCD principles, the employee will be encouraged to dispute (D) their irrational beliefs and replace them with rational beliefs which are presented as alternatives (E) (Dryden, 2009). In an attempt to reduce employees' emotional disturbances, an occupational counselor with a good knowledge of REBT skills can ask an employee questions like: Does the belief make sense? Is there any evidence for the beliefs? Is the belief helpful? Once the irrational beliefs have been effectively and correctly disputed and recognized as being rigid, unrealistic, illogical, and unhelpful, the rational alternatives are also disputed but stated as being healthy, flexible, and logical (Dryden, 2009; Dryden & Branch, 2008). Through the inculcation of strategies and ideas such as cognitive, feeling, and behavioural methods, the REBT approach also helps different people to alter their poor perception and evaluation of organizational core values and ethics in converting from maladaptive beliefs to the adaptive ones (Ellis & Dryden, 1997). The final letter 'E' represents Effect. If employees can actively and persistently dispute (D) their irrational beliefs, they will be able to create an effective new philosophy (E) which includes strong rational coping statements that can help them to feel better, get better and stay better (David et al., 2005).

Globally, REBT is one of the most powerful, cost-effective and leading cognitive therapies. In REBT, Ellis advocates that people's reactions are faulty because the thinking pattern is erroneous. This shows that our cognition can influence our emotions and behaviours. To change the emotions and behaviour, the change must start with cognition. However, any cognitive process that is

unhealthy and irrational leads to emotional disturbances and behavioural mal-adjustment or flaws. In the advocacy, event (Activating Event) does not change or make us emotionally disturbed and cognitively nervous but our belief system (B) which may lead us to terrifying consequences or situations (C). When the situation becomes inimical to our wellbeing, there will be a need for a therapist or counselor. Ellis called this illustration the ABCs principle. Take for instance, a teacher who lost their job because of inconsistencies and poor attitude to work value, and who for that reason is clinically diagnosed with depression or any other possible ailment. The cause of the ailment is not sanctioned but probably because of their belief system or value system for the career job. This is the influence of cognitive errors.

Regarding this scenario, studies had shown that the REBT principle cushions the effects in organizational settings (Morris, 1993; Nwokeoma et al., 2019; Ogbuanya et al., 2017; Onyishi et al., 2020). Collectively, these studies agree that REBT is one of the therapeutic modalities which have been effectively utilized in helping workers within an organization. In Nigeria, some studies have also indicated that REBT approaches have been previously established to be efficient for improving Nigerian employees' general mental wellbeing, good job relationship, rational beliefs (Nwokeoma et al., 2019; Ogbuanya et al., 2017; Onyishi et al., 2020). Given the effectiveness of REBT approaches, this study assumes that the rational emotive behavioural occupational health therapy intervention will be effective in changing the negative perceptions of work value and ethical practices among primary school teachers in Imo State, South East Nigeria. In this study, we hypothesize that rational emotive behavior occupational health therapy intervention will be significantly effective in reducing negative perceptions of work value and ethical practices among primary school teachers in Enugu state, South East Nigeria, when compared to the intervention group and no intervention group, at three points of assessment.

Method

Ethical approval and considerations

Approval to carry out this research was given by the University Research and Ethics Board through the Faculty of Education Review Committee. To ensure that we follow research ethical standards and principles as in the American Psychological Association (APA), we registered this study with UMIN retrospectively. Further, the school management gave access to work with their staff and granted permission to conduct the study in their schools. After obtaining the permission, we distributed inform consent forms to the teachers for completion. Out of 155 of the teachers who received consent forms, 149 returned theirs to the researchers. A total of 149 were assessed using the instruments and inclusion criteria. These include included: a) a permanent staff; b) within the

mean age range of 28 to 60; c) licensed by Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria; and d) must be a primary school teacher. At the end 134 teachers were included and recruited as participants and 15 teachers were excluded from the study.

Participants

The study used 134 primary school teachers in private schools that participated during the assessments and treatment. More details about the participants of this study are presented in Table 1. The Gpower statistical method was utilized to check if the number of the participants is adequate and representative enough. According to the estimated power, which is roughly 130, it indicates that 134 participants were adequate. The adequacy of the number of the participants that constituted our sample was verified using the Gpower statistical tool. For more information about the gender, age, marital status, etc. can be seen in Table 1.

Measures

The Organizational Values Scale (OVS) (Porto and Ferreira, 2016) is a 24-item self-report scale that is intended to gauge how representatives or organizational employees rate the meaning of their values to the association where they worked. The 24 items are assembled into six measurement categories (subscales): Autonomy, Conservatism, Hierarchy, Egalitarianism, Harmony, and Mastery. Some examples of the item statements in the OVS include "elimination of competitors, protecting the environment, centralization of standard-setting in the upper hierarchy, cordiality in the relationship between employees, fidelity to the organization's established practices, employees' performance according to the organization's mission, and autonomy of employees in performing tasks. OVS is a high level rendition of the Organizational Culture Scale created by Hofstede et al. (1990), the Contending Worth System , OCP (O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell, 1991), the Organizational Values Profile Stock (Oliveira and Tamayo, 2004), and the Organizational Values Scale (Tamayo et al., 2000). Likewise, OVS was planned dependent on the suggestions of Schwartz's values. Participants ranged from 0 (not important at all) to 10 (extremely important). The validity and reliability of the scale was 87 utilizing Guttman's Lambda. Past study demonstrated that the scale is very valid and reliable using Nigerian employees (Abiogu et al., 2021).

Secondly, the Ethical Sensitivity Scale (ESS) was conceptualized from Narvaez's operationalization of ethical sensitivity (2001). Its fundamental intention is to scale the pupils' directions on ethical issues. The ESS estimates the accompanying seven elements of ethical sensitivity: (a) Reading and expressing emotions, (b) accepting the perspectives of others, (c) caring by connecting to

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants.

Characteristics	REBOI group n (%)	Waitlist control group n (%)	Statistic χ^2	sig
Gender				
Male	39 (58.2)	21 (31.3)	9.778	.002
Female	28 (41.8)	46 (68.7)		
Location				
Urban	38 (56.7)	31 (46.3)	1.464	.226
Rural	29 (43.3)	36 (53.7)		
Marital status				
Single	18 (26.9)	20 (29.9)		
Married	32 (47.8)	45 (67.2)	14.145	.003
Separated	8 (11.9)	1 (1.5)		
Divorced	9 (13.4)	1 (1.5)		
Ethnicity				
Igbo	38 (56.7)	26 (38.8)		
Yoruba	19 (28.4)	20 (29.9)	6.179	0.046
Others	10 (14.9)	21 (31.3)		
Age				
Below 35 years	23 (34.3)	28 (41.8)	.895	.639
36–45yrs	29 (43.3)	27 (40.3)		
46 and Above	15 (22.4)	12 (17.9)		
Years of experience				
1–10 years	45 (67.2)	42 (62.7)		
11–20 years	12 (17.9)	14 (20.9)	.305	.859
21–30 years	10 (14.9)	11 (16.4)		
31 years and above	12 (16.2)	9 (12.2)		
Qualifications				
NCE	42 (62.7)	45 (67.2)		
Bachelor degree	25 (37.3)	15 (22.4)	9.603	.008
Masters degree	0 (0.0)	7 (10.4)		

n: number of participant; REBOI: Rational Emotion Behavioural Occupational Intervention; %: Percentage; χ^2: Chi-square; sig: Associated probability; NCE: Nigeria Certificate in Education.

others, (d) working with interpersonal and group differences, (e) preventing social bias, (f) generating interpretations and options and (g) identifying the consequences of actions and options. Each measurement subscale has four items.

The instrument comprises 28 items on a Likert Scale, going from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The ESS items were intended to apply to individuals from various foundations and societies. This permits us to utilize the instrument in a multicultural society and in culturally diverse investigations. The item statements depicted the issues and values that the respondent thought about

significant for the person in question. Every one of the seven subscale was operationalized in the poll with four articulations. The scale had the most elevated reliabilities ($\alpha = .78$; $\alpha = .75$). This study confirmed the reliability ($\alpha = 0.76$)) of the scale.

Procedure

The research team visited approximately 10 primary schools to obtain official permission from the school authority, which was granted by the head teachers. Few days later, letters of written inform consent crafted by the researchers were disseminated to teachers in their different schools. The teachers took the letters home to understand and digest before agreeing to participate. In the letter, it was clearly stated that no financial benefits are attached to people that may wish to participate. Roughly 90% of the teachers agreed to participate in the study. All the teachers who gave their consent were orally assessed based on terms and conditions required for admission. The conditions include: a) must be a confirmed staff; b) must be teaching in government approved schools; c) certified by Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria; d) must be a full-time staff member; e) teachers who have record of query(ies) due to work deviant behaviour; and f) must have fallen within the cut-off scores of the measures.

The measures (organizational values scale, ethical sensitivity scale, and value congruence scale) aimed to obtain the initial status of the teachers' negative value towards the work culture and ethical practices as in Abiogu et al. (2021). Those that met the inclusionary measurement and criteria were called for an initial meeting via text messages sent to their mobile phones by the researchers. Exclusion of participation was given to teachers who did not meet up with those terms and conditions. The 134 eligible participants met at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu Enugu State, that is, the treatment venue. They were randomly distributed to two groups (rational emotive behaviour occupational intervention group = 67 participants and waitlist control group = 67 participants) using a simple random sampling technique without replacement (see Figure 1 for clarity). This is a situation where the participants were asked to pick cut-out cards from a bowl. The cut-out cards were inscribed with REBOIG indicating rational emotive behaviour occupational intervention group and WCG meaning waitlist control group. This technique was employed to ensure that participants are blinded and maintain selection concealment. The 67 participants assigned to REBOIG were exposed to a 12-week programme implemented by rational emotive behaviour therapists. The intervention was designed (Abiogu et al., 2021) to last for eight sessions. Five sessions out of the eight sessions held in five weeks (i.e., one session per a week) whereas three with sub-sessions took place in six weeks, and the last session (termination stage) for the 12th week. Each session lasted for an hour. To ensure active participation from every participant, we further divided the intervention group into three
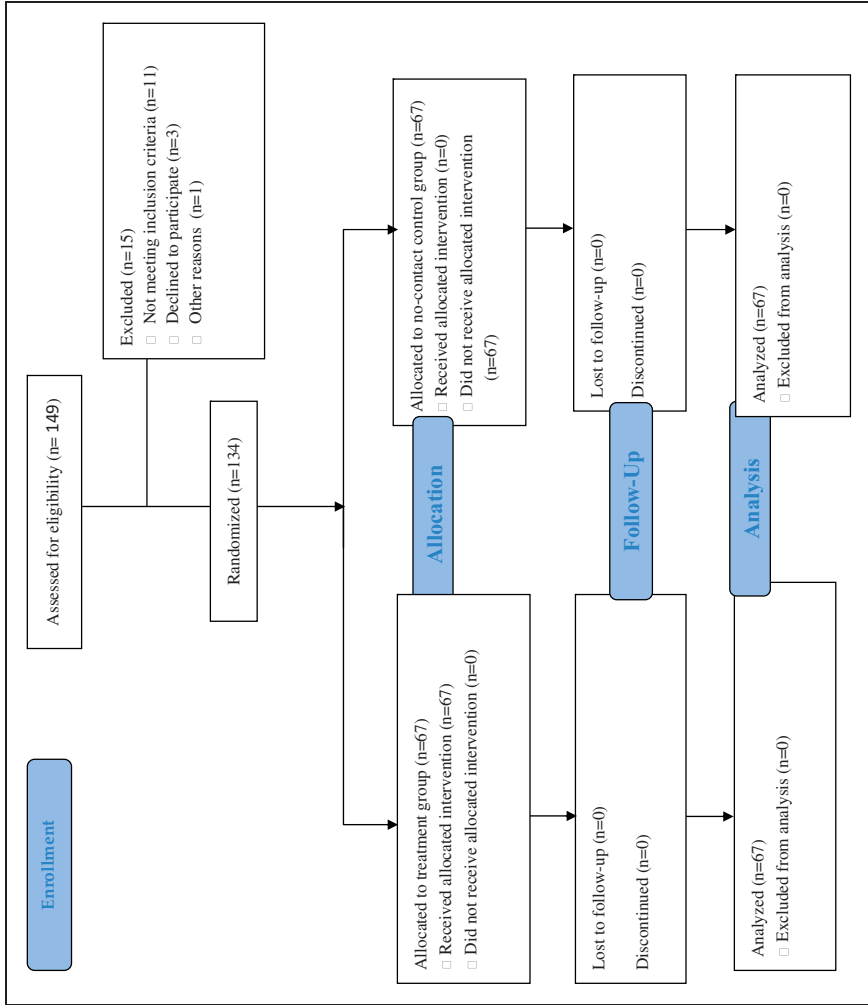
Figure 1. Participants' eligibility flow chart.

sub-groups tagged REBOI-programme A = 23 participants, REBOI-programme B = 22 participants, and REBOI-programme C = 22 participants. However, the sub-group participants were assigned to different college theatres and therapists but the same treatment manual, timeframe and techniques were employed during sessions. Considering possible implementation challenges, the members of the research team were assigned to each subgroup to monitor the implementation process of the intervention. Each researcher was given treatment integrity checklist to the activities of each subgroup members and their respective therapists. The goal was to ensure a uniform programme implementation across subgroups for actualization of the general objective and specific session objective. On the other hand, participants in the waitlisted control group were asked to leave and informed that the time of meeting will be communicated via contact addresses.

The REBOI sessions:

Session 1 = Introducing the participants and therapists. Making the participants understand the aim of the intervention.
Session 2 = Conceptualising work value, work importance, and engaging participants with practice exercises.
Session 3 = Classification of work value, how to identify acceptable and unacceptable work value.
Session 4 = Exposing the philosophies of REBT, how it can be applied in a work environment.
Session 5 = Concept of ethical practices, establishing how irrationality about work values and ethical practices is related to low job productivity and outputs.
Session 6 = How to manage the difference between ethical standards and personal beliefs.
Session 7 = Identification of erroneous assumptions associated with poor evaluation of decisions, disputing poor and negative evaluation of events, work value, and ethical practices to better ones.
Session 8 = Illustrating how psychological disturbances could influence tendency to abuse core values in workplace.
Session 9 = Teachers' erroneous cues, thinking, and disposition that affect work value and ethical practices.
Session 10 = Addressing the how to quit and challenge teachers' negative behaviours, attitudes, and thinking associated with work value and ethical practices. Outlining rational-emotive strategies.
Session 11 = Practicing the rational-emotive strategies that enhance adaptive behaviours.
Session 12 = Revision, review of home exercise and termination.

At the end of the 12-week programme, they reconvened to same venue. Immediately, the researchers distributed copies of measurement tools to the

participants in treatment and waitlisted control groups which they completed on the spot, it lasted from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. The participants in intervention and control groups met again after two months and this was an opportunity to assess effects of the REBOI overtime as a follow-up. The follow-up meeting began by measuring the level of improvement using the dependent measures. Shortly after the third assessment, the researchers had brief discussions regarding the constructs. At this point, we applied some techniques like motivational interviewing and enhancement, etc., to know how the participants would react over work value and ethical practice.

Therapists

We deployed three REBT therapists who had significant scholarship in rational emotive behavioral therapy and had practiced for over eight years. They have PhDs in mental health and rehabilitation counselling, aged 37 to 50. Each therapist handled a sub-group at different treatment locations. The REBT experts delivered the intervention.

Treatment manual

Rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention (REBOI; Abiogu et al., 2021) is a 12-session psycho-educational intervention manual that uses the techniques and philosophical guidelines of REBT to alter irrational beliefs that triggers negative values and unrealistic ethical practices of teachers with regard to organizational core values. REBOI has five stages adopted in addressing the irrational beliefs of teachers, namely; weekly timeframe, session objective, themes, session activities, and cognitive-behavioral. The intervention manual was broken down into 12 sessions with 60 minutes per session. Each session was designed to last for a week. In sessions, the therapists would establish the building of a therapeutic relationship with participants; establishing codes of conduct, familiarization, and stating the objective of the study. In sessions two, three, and four, the therapists focused on; value, work value, types (desirable and undesirable), and indicators of desirable and undesirable. While in sessions five and six, the therapists focused on; addressing the ethical practices in the teaching profession, how teachers appreciate their professional practice, and the role of teachers in protecting ethics in teaching. In sessions seven and eight the therapists addressed; the relationship between work value and ethical practices, teachers' perception of work value and ethical behaviors, and how emotional imbalance can trigger cognitive disturbances. In sessions nine and ten the therapists focused on: the identification of teachers' negative cues, behaviors, attitudes, and thinking related to work value and ethical practices; how negative self-belief or irrational personal value could influence organizational core values; teachers' relationship with institutional management, and

assignment. Finally, sessions eleven and twelve focused on: how to deal with teachers' negative cues, behaviours, attitudes, and thinking associated with work value and ethical practices; practicing self-help steps; how to choose more adaptive and functional ways of coping with work value and ethical standards; reinforcing rational value-based behaviors; and termination. The intervention manual noted some cognitive and behavioural techniques which REBC practitioners utilized. Among the techniques are; cognitive alliance, cognitive disputation and restructuring, reframing, problem-solving skills, rational-emotive imagery, shame attacking technique and reinforcement.

Data analysis

Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was used for the analysis of the data collected during at pretest, posttest, and follow-up test. MANCOVA helped the analysts to distribute the data according to treatment and control groups. It was also utilized to assign the two independent levels (intervention and waitlisted groups) as the categorical variable and the dependent measures as the continuous variable. The MANCOVA limits the joint error rate which would have arisen from performing a series of analysis of variance tests. Age and years of experience were used as discrete variables. Contextually, age was used as discrete data because the number of the participants that fall within an age range. If the participants had provided their individual age that is when age is used as continuous data or a variable. We categorized in such a manner because some of the participants may not like to provide their real age for job security reasons. It was used as discrete data because of the number of the participants that fall within a year of experience. Reason being that none of them wished to disclose when (year of experience) such participant started working.

Results

Table 1 shows that the REBOI group comprised 39 males (58.2%) and 28 (41.8%) were females; the waitlist control group comprised 21 males (31.3%) and 46 (68.7%) females. From the analyses of results, it can be determined that no significant gender difference was observed amongst the study participants ($\chi 2 = 9.778$, $p = 0.002$). With regard to geographical location, 38 participants (56.7%) in the treatment group were working in urban schools and 29 (43.3%) were working in rural primary schools; the waitlist control group comprised 31 (46.3%) in urban and 36 (53.7%) in rural schools. From the analyses of results, it can be determined that no significant gender difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi t2 = 1.464$, $p = 0.226$). In terms of marital status, in the treatment group, 18 (26.9%) participants were single, 32 (47.8%) participants were married, 8 (11.9%) had separated, and 9 (13.4%)

had divorced. In the comparison group, 20 (29.9%) participants were single, 45 (67.2%) participants were married, 1 (1.5%) had separated, and 1 (1.5%) had divorced. No significant ethnicity difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi 2 = 14.145$, $p = 0.003$).

Regarding ethnicity, in the treatment (REBOI) group, 38 participants (56.7%) were from the Igbo tribe, 19 (28.4%) were from the Yoruba tribe and 10 (14.9%) were from other ethnic origins. On the other hand, in the comparison group, 26 participants (38.8%) were from the Igbo tribe, 20 (29.9%) were Yoruba and 21 (31.3%) were from other ethnic backgrounds. No significant ethnicity difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi 2 = 6.179$, $p = 0.046$). For the age, regarding those in the REBOI group, 23 participants (34.3%) were below 35 years, 29 (43.3%) were within the 36to 45 years range, and 15 (22.4%) were within the age range of 46 years and above. In the waitlist control group, 28 participants (41.8%) were below 35 years, 27 (40.3%) were within the age range of 36to 45 years, and 12 (17.9%) were within the age range of 46 years and above. No significant age difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi 2 = .895$, $p = 0.639$).

In the REBOI group, 45 participants (67.2%) had 1 to 10 years of teaching experience, 12 (17.9%) fell within 11to 20 years of experience, 10 (14.9%) were within 21to 30 years of experience, and 12 (16.2) had 31 years of experience and above. In the waitlist control group, 42 participants (62.7%) had 1to 10 years of experience, 14 (20.9%) had 11to 20 years of experience, 11 (16.4%) had 21 to 30 years of experience, and 9 (12.2%) fell within 31 years of experience. No significant years of experience difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi 2 = 0.305$, $p = 0.859$). Regarding qualifications, in the treatment group, 42 participants (62.7%) had the Nigeria Certificate in Education, 25 (37.3%) were Bachelor Degree holders, and 0 (0.0%) had Master degree and 0(0.0%). In the waitlist control group, 42 participants (62.7%) had the Nigeria Certificate in Education, 25 (37.3%) were Bachelor Degree holders, and 0 (0.0%) had Master Degrees and 0(0.0%). No significant qualification difference was observed among the study participants ($\chi 2 = 9.603$, $p = 0.008$).

Table 2 shows the study outcomes for the participants in the treatment group (REBOI) compared to the waitlist control group (WCG) over the three periods. Before the treatment, data indicates that there was a significant difference between the treatment and control groups in initial value congruence in favor of the control group as measured by OVS, $F(1,33) = 0.137$, $p = 0.712$, $\eta p2 = -0.013$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.005$. At posttreatment, the effect of REBOI was significant in favor of the treatment group in the value congruence as measured by OVS, $F(1,33) = 18.546$, $p = 0.000$, $\eta p2 = 0.153$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.343$. After the posttreatment, the follow-up results show that $F(1,33) = 4.729$, $p = 0.031$, $\eta p2 = 0.077$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.406$ which is still significant in favour of treatment group. Furthermore, the $\eta p2$ (partial eta squared) value of 0.077 at posttest level indicated that

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of variance for the effect of rational emotive behaviour occupational intervention on work value and ethical practice.

Measures	Time	Group	Mean (SD)	F	p	ηp2	ΔR^2	95%CI
OVS								
	Time 1	REBOI	48.17 (5.77)	.137	.712	−.013	0.005	47.122–49.341
		Control	48.44 (6.58)					
	Time 2	REBOI	93.93 (4.53)	18.546	.000	.153	0.343	94.523–95.969
		Control	96.39 (3.91)					
	Time 3	REBOI	100.57 (3.68)	4.729	.031	.077	0.406	100.426–101.797
		Control	101.44 (4.27)					
ESS								
	Tine 1	REBOI	46.53 (7.15)	1.005	.318	.008	.024	45.865–48.513
		Control	48.57 (7.74)					
	Time 2	REBOI	107.05 (5.03)	9.065	.003	.065	.060	107.375–109.012
		Control	108.96 (4.21)					
	Time 3	REBOI	109.81 (5.06)	2.722	.101	.021	.007	109.601–111.214
		Control	111.18 (3.83)					

OVS: Organizational Values Scale; ESS: Ethical Sensitivity Scale; Mean (SD): Mean (Standard Deviation); p: probability value; ηp2: Partial Eta Square (effect size).

REBOI accounted for improvement in the organizational work value of participants.

The result from the plots (Figures 2 and 3) indicates that the positive treatment outcome observed does not differ by gender in that both male and female benefited from the outcome.

Table 2 shows the study outcomes for the participants in the treatment group (REBOI) compared to the waitlist control group (WCG) over the three periods. Before the treatment, data indicates that there was a significant difference between the treatment and control groups in initial value congruence in favor of the control group as measured by EES, F (1,33) = 1.005, p = 0.318, ηp2 = 0.008, ΔR^2 = 0.024. At posttreatment, the effect of REBOI was significant in favor of the treatment group in the value congruence as measured by EES, F (1,33) = 9.065, p = 0.003, ηp2 = 0.065, ΔR^2 = 0.060. After the posttreatment, the follow-up results show that F (1,33) = 2.722, p = 0.101, ηp2 = 0.021, ΔR^2 = 0.007 which is still significant in favor of the treatment group. Furthermore, the ηp2 (partial eta squared) value of 0.065 at the posttest level indicated that REBOI accounted for improvement in the ethical practice of participants.

Figures 4 and 5 show the interaction effect of groups and gender with regards to **the** Ethical Sensitivity Scale. The direction of the arrows at time 2 (Figure 4) is an indication that male and female primary school teachers found the intervention beneficial. Meanwhile, at the third point (Figure 5), the interaction effect of the groups (treatment and control) and gender differs implying that the level of
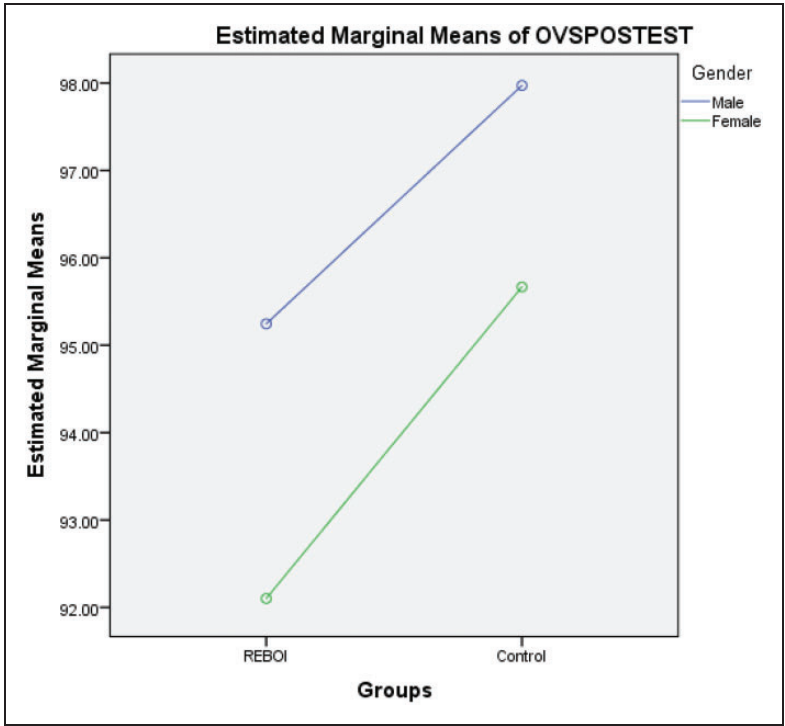
Figure 2. Interaction effect of groups and gender based on Organizational Values Scale (OVS) at Time 2.

the change with regards to perception of ethical practices observed among the teachers was not same across gender.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that the effect of REBOI was significant on each of the components of organizational value in favor of the treatment group. The overall follow-up result shows that the effect of REBOI was significant on organizational value, ethical sensitivity, and value congruence in favor of the treatment group, in Nigeria. Studies have identified wrong value orientation and a pervasive trend in valuing educational certificates and its acquisition as factors responsible for examination malpractices in Nigeria (Abdullahi, 2009; Asinya, 2012; Joshua et al., 2010). Many teachers perceive a threat to their self–esteem as they consider consequences of failure, some of which include negative evaluations by significant others. REBT is designed to treat irrational beliefs about self by helping the person to dispute and confront their irrational beliefs and
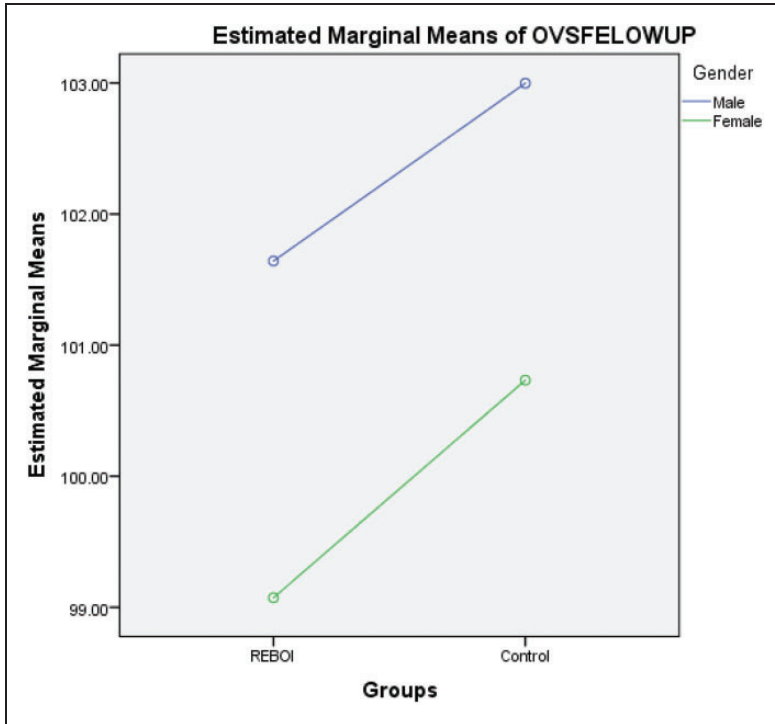
Figure 3. Interaction effect of groups and gender based on OVS at Time 3.

replacing them with realistic ones (Ede et al., 2020; Onyishi et al., 2020; Ntamu, 2017). Ntamu (2017) stressed that REBT is not only effective in eliminating a distorted value system, but that it also improves three major values namely; dignity in hard work, integrity and honesty, and internal locus of control. It was found that improvement in attitudes of participants was due to rational emotive behavioral intervention that was deployed (Ntamu, 2017). Indeed, REBT is cost-effective and useful in identifying and changing irrational beliefs towards hard work values and practices (Ntamu, 2017). Adaptive work value enhances a sense of meaning and purpose of work life that can sustain the sound quality of work life. Using rational emotive behavioral techniques, employees with maladaptive beliefs and false operational values about work value could be restructured cognitively by exposing such individuals to experiences that are contrary to the distorted cognition (Heimberg, 2002). Furthermore, our study also corroborates an earlier study which showed that the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Approach Module was effective in enhancing cognitive and behavioral coping skills in conflict management among teachers in Nigeria (Mustafa et al., 2018).
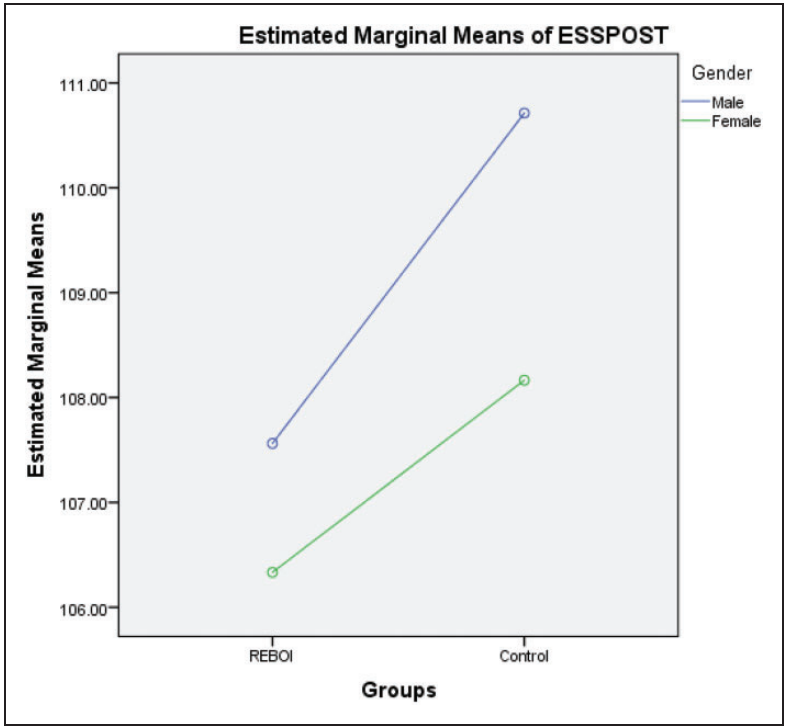
Figure 4. Interaction effect of groups and gender based on ESS at Time 2.

The significant role of cognitive-behavioral modalities in addressing values is potentially useful in the psychotherapeutic profession (Grumet & Fitzpatrick, 2016) as well as other professions. Values in the workplace sustain purpose and meaning of life. As a result, work value is a vehicle through which the therapeutic process could be enhanced in the clients' wellbeing (Grumet & Fitzpatrick, 2016). In this direction, rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention assists teachers to clarify work value and their values. Similarly, to the findings of our study, existing literature demonstrates that clinical professionals help clients look for areas in their lives in which they derive vitality, meaning and purpose; and to differentiate these from extrinsically motivated endeavors (Hayes et al., 2013).

An earlier study reported the effectiveness of cognitive and behavioral techniques in identifying the top five values: connecting with nature, acting with courage, being ambitious and hardworking, helping others, and having genuine and close friends (Grumet & Fitzpatrick, 2016). A case study conducted by (Grumet & Fitzpatrick, 2016) concluded that principles of cognitive behavioral
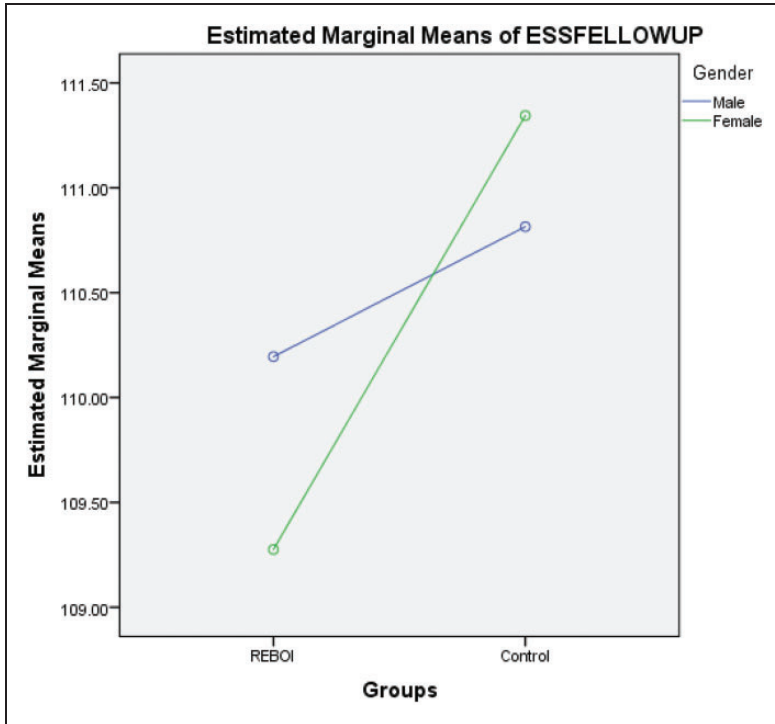
Figure 5. Interaction effect of groups and gender based on ESS at Time 3.

approaches are useful and impactful in initiating and changing values. By extension, rational emotive behavioral occupational intervention could change the personal values of a teacher to align work value in various organizational settings.

Furthermore, findings from our study agree with past studies which found that the rational emotive behavioral approach was useful in changing negatively skewed behavioral responses of general populations (Ellis & Bernard, 1985; Mahfar & Senin, 2015). Specifically, the workers' population was found to be more accurate in decision-making and in handling occupational challenges in workplaces (Bonnar, 2000). The findings of this study also give credence to the thriving application of REBT across studies. For example, Bernard (2016) found that REBT principles have strong therapeutic effects in identifying and altering inaccurate beliefs among employees. More so, the outcome of this study has confirmed some previous studies that suggests that occupation-focused rational emotive training is beneficial and therapeutic (Nwokeoma et al., 2019; Terjesen & Kurasaki, 2009). In light of this, Nwokeoma et al. (2019)

stated that irrational perceptions of Nigerian employees can be changed using REBT principles.

We conclude that the principles of the REBOI program should be integrated into the workplace environment; and by so doing, researchers in the field of occupational health, career counseling, educational philosophy, etc. could explore and advance the strategy. Potentially, occupational health therapists can seek future improvement of the REBOI program by considering the variable future of REBOI research when promoting professional ethics and work values. Further, school management teams should integrate the REBOI-program into teachers' institutes or the curriculum for teacher education. Also, integration of the REBOI assumptions into the Nigerian teacher education curriculum would improve the work value system and adherence to ethical practices by Nigerian teachers, at all levels.

This study is significant as it has investigated the effect of rational-emotive behavior occupational intervention on the perceptions of work value and ethical practices among primary school teachers in a select part of Nigeria; a research area that is under-researched in Nigeria. The attitudinal change of employees in organizational settings has been a problematic public issue for a considerable number of employers in developing nations. An additional significance for the study lies in the fact that the researchers were able to administer treatment to the participants in the comparison group after engaging the participants in the primary treatment group.

In this study, we suggested strategies for creating a positive REBOI workplace environment include: 1) Rational communication in the workplace: good communication between a boss and his or her employees is fundamental for a positive working relationship and it enhances positive outputs. Irrationality is evident in the communication and used in the daily narrative of every organization. Sometimes, how superior communicate to the subordinate is inappropriate may be described as irrational. Therefore, we advocate that, workers in an occupational setting maintain good communication to create a positive REBOI workplace environment. 2) Recognize hard work: to sustain a positive REBOI workplace, diligence and commitment should be reinforced. Employees that have positive work attitudes or such values should be encouraged. Itis a great idea to compensate a worker who does great work. If the good work is recognized, it will push the employee/teacher to keep up the awesome work. 3) Encourage positive thinking: Helping people to have control over cognitive bias. 4) Change the way you respond: When someone disagrees with you about something at work, think "how interesting" instead of immediately getting defensive. 5) Monitor your moods: disposition is very contagious in place of work. Boost your mood so that your good feelings can rub off on those around you. Spend a few minutes recollecting and visualizing a time when you were enjoying yourself. Attempt to keep that feeling at the beat of your consciousness or intellect as frequently as possible throughout your day especially during

working hours. Finding meaning and reason to remain positive in whatever your organization calls values and ethics. Do not forget that you are very important, and the job is also important to you. Think about how your commitments can add sustainable value to your workplace, and your customer/students.

Practice implications

As the treatment outcome showed that REBOI is a good intervention for improving positive work values and ethical practices, it implies that teachers with unethical behaviour could seek for rational-emotive attention as it could help the person to adjust to the core values of the institution he serves. We therefore suggest that career counsellors adopt principles of REBT in helping primary school employees. In this regard it is possible that using this model in Nigerian primary schools will reduce occupational maladjustment and inappropriate behaviours among employees in educational sectors to a minimal level. Practitioners in the field of REBT can extend their practice to schools. Teachers need to know what their operational value in their workplaces should be. During teachers' conferences, school counsellors and psychologists can relate views of REBT and work values and ethics. Some of them engage in unethical practice unconsciously, indicating a poor knowledge of the difference between conceived values and operational values. REBT practitioners should as a matter fact be actively involved in occupational value orientations.

   Looking at the powerful impact of the REBT intervention, there should more efforts to reflect the practice of REBT approaches such as REBOI in educational policy. Addressing this concern could change the poor attitudes of Nigerian primary teachers and possibly other employees in the Ministry of Education. Considering that the effectiveness of REBOI spans across gender, we recommend the establishment of REBT institutes in Nigeria. This could assist teachers in practice and those in training to access REBT coaching and orientations. We argue that such movement helps to support cognitive therapists and career professionals working on work values and ethical conduct to integrate teachers' personal values (Abiogu et al., 2021), considering that the teachers' personal value system may be powerful motivation in encouraging positive work behaviour (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). As suggested by past literature (Grumet & Fitzpatrick, 2016) building and training clinical practitioners in values could enhance a fair occupational environment and support motivation for value reorientation. We recommend that policies should extend similar aspects to the educational sector. Our expectation is that strong policy should integrate work values and REBT philosophies in teachers training institutes in developing countries to reduce potential negative impacts of poor work value systems and unethical behaviours. This is in line with a past study recommended

for infusing value orientation and work value in psychotherapeutic practice (Abiogu et al., 2021).

Limitations

Like past quantitative investigations, our study has few methodological weaknesses, though, may not seriously affect the generalizability of the findings to primary school teachers in Nigeria. Firstly, we should have used qualitative measures to assess the work value and ethical practice as these concepts reflect attitudes and morals. Using these qualitative measures would have investigated deeply rooted issues about the dependent measures. On contrary, only quantitative measures were adopted, hence, prospective researchers should explore qualitative measures. Secondly, we are aware that teachers in secondary schools and technical colleges may have irrational beliefs about positive work value and ethical conduct but were not included in the study. Such omission is a limitation; therefore, future researchers should investigate the impact of REBOI using secondary school and technical colleges teachers. Failing to measure the teachers' negative feelings, thinking and behaviour at pretest, posttest and follow-up assessment; and correlating the results with work value and ethical measures; could be a limitation of this study. Given this weakness, we recommend that subsequent researchers should consider inclusion of the irrational belief scale in future studies.

ORCID iD

Moses Onyemaechi Ede 🔟 https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6291-7250

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Author Biographies

Moses Onyemaechi Ede is a Postdoctoral Fellow, School of Education Studies, University of The Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa and a Lecturer in Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria. Dr Ede is resilient and unassuming in making sure that he achieves his career objective. He has over 60 publications published in reputable journals. He has attended both international and national conferences where he presented papers. He is a Guess Editor of special issue in one the world ranking journals. Research interests span through gambling, quality of family life, depression, work stress, value, family health model of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy among others.

Chinedu Ifedi Okeke is professor for sociology of education and early year education, as well as Head of School of Education Studies at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. He holds a Ph.D. in sociology of education from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. His current research interests concern how young children develop during their education studies. In particular, how their life experiences can enable them to transcend the potential that appears to be laid out for them by their socio-economic origins.

Friday Adene Mamudu. Lecturer 1 in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Research interest: Behavior modification strategies and therapies, Teaching strategies and human relations. Email: friday.adene@unn.edu.ng

Anthony C. Areji is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I graduated from the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1996 with BA(Hons). I also obtained my MA and PhD degrees in 1999 and 2007 respectively; with specialisation in Political and Social Philosophy. I joined the Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2000. Since then, I have been teaching and researching. My research interests cover areas in African Philosophy, Globalization, Bioethics, Ethics and Politics and Philosophy of Development.