

## EFFICACY OF REALITY THERAPY ON SUICIDAL IDEATION AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS WITH DIFFERENT PARENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL

**<sup>1</sup>FAITH OSEDEBAMEN CLARA GIWA-AMU (Ph.D)**

Pathrestorers Counselling Centre, Abuja

E-Mail: [faithgiwaamu@yahoo.com](mailto:faithgiwaamu@yahoo.com)

GSM-No.: 08156670006

**<sup>2</sup>KINGSLEY OAIKHENA (Ph.D)**

Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology,

Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

E-Mail: [kingsley.oaikhena@uniben.edu](mailto:kingsley.oaikhena@uniben.edu)

GSM-No.: 08068939461

### Abstract

*The study investigated the Efficacy of Reality Therapy in the management of Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents in Abuja Municipal Area Council. It also examined the interaction effect of treatment by Parents' Socio-Economic Status on Suicidal Ideation. Two research questions and hypotheses were raised to guide the study. Quasi-Experimental research design method was adopted. The population was 12,400 with a sample size of 44 students. An adapted instrument, Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire for in-school Adolescents, was used for data collection with a reliability co-efficient of 0.92 that was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics, paired sample t-test, and Analysis of Variance. Findings showed that Reality Therapy was effective on Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents, and there was no significant interaction effect by Parents' Socio-Economic Status on Suicidal Ideation. It was then recommended that counselling psychologists should adapt this therapy to assist students with suicidal thoughts and behaviours.*

**Keywords:** Efficacy, Reality Therapy, Suicidal Ideation, in-school Adolescents, Parents' Socio-Economic Status

**DOI:** <https://doie.org/10.10318/SER.2025133426>

### Introduction

Adolescence is a distinct phase of human development. It serves as a transition from childhood to adulthood, bringing with it significant responsibilities, societal expectations, and the need for supervision and guidance. The concept of adolescent differs per expert. For instance, Owosina (2020) averred that an adolescent is typically a person between the ages of 10 and 19 years, and that adolescent may extend this range up to 24 years. This stage of development is marked by notable changes, such as the onset of puberty, identity formation, and growing independence. They often encounter unique challenges particularly in areas like education, relationships, and personal growth, which is also common with those actively involved in the educational system (in-school Adolescents). Challenges such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, and more, may hinders their overall development and academic success. With focus on in-school Adolescents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), as perceived by the researchers, Suicidal Ideation stands out as the most worrisome among these problems.

Suicidal Ideations are thoughts of suicidal actions. They are intense imaginations, deep consideration to harm or kill ones' self. These thoughts cannot be seen thus making it difficult to identify or predict those that may act on them. Likely "red flags" persons

susceptible to suicidal thinking may show are: isolation from friends, family, or colleagues; avoiding daily activities; self-harm or self-mutilation; giving away personal belongings; expressing strong feelings of helplessness or hopelessness; talking about death or suicide; and significant changes in weight or eating habits (Belmont Behavioural Health System, 2023). Whereas, these could be occurring because of financial crises, depression, drug abuse, loss of loved ones, loneliness, physical illness, lack of self-disclosure, and self-blame, all leading to suicidal actions if left unchecked. Suicidal action or suicide is a global phenomenon causing major concern around the world. The World Health Organization (2021) revealed how it has been of detrimental effect to adolescents and particularly drew its concern on the effect it may have on the emergence of mentally healthy and psychologically stable future leaders. Its statistics showed that people (over 703,000) take their own life and many more attempt suicide. Suicide was discovered to occur throughout lifespans, and it was the fourth leading cause of death among ages fifteen to twenty-nine years globally in 2019. It occurs in every sphere of the globe, be it low, middle or high, income countries. It also showed Nigeria as having the highest rate of suicide among African countries in 2016 with over 17,000 lives lost to suicide. It estimated the cases of suicide globally; noting that, across the world one person takes their life every 40 seconds. Attempts on suicide are only actualised after much brooding on such thoughts.

Attempt to address the problem of suicide has called for many treatment options. For example, numerous treatment options exist for adolescents in school who are experiencing mental health illnesses such as, psychotherapy, medications, and safe planning (Safai & West, 2022). Reality Therapy, developed by William Glasser in 1965, was the focus of this study. This stressed that choices made by individuals are done to meet essential needs, which are also influenced by their thoughts and emotions and its outcomes may produce either positive or negative actions. One of the goals of this therapy is to help people learn how to change their (suicidal) behaviours by learning how to become aware of negative actions (such as suicidal actions) so that they choose not to repeat the same (self-mutilating) behaviour. This therapy applies the concept of personal responsibility, so an individual alone is responsible for wanting to change (Nunez, 2021; WebMD Editorial Contributors, 2023; Giwa-Amu, 2025). Socio-economic status of parents may also predispose in-school Adolescents to Suicidal Ideation (Begum, et al., 2018). Parents' Socio-Economic Status (PSES) which are the sociological and economic standing parents hold in the society (be it high, middle or low), which may influence the emergence of suicidal thinking among in-school Adolescents in the society if denied their basic needs. This may make them become victims of psychological problems. It is paramount to note that basic amenities are fundamental to life, the deprivations of which could be incalculable on youths thus the ensuing stress, depressed, loss of hope, emergence thoughts of suicide, and ultimately opting for suicide as rational alternatives (Ikwuba, 2011; Okoedion & Okolie, 2019).

#### Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of suicidal thoughts, previously uncommon in school-aged adolescents in Nigeria has become common within the country, and particularly in Abuja. With about 300,000 resident in Abuja upon its inauguration in 1986 as the Federal Capital of Nigeria (after being moved from Lagos), there has been increase in population to twenty million in 1996. There has also been an increase in problems in Abuja that Lagos originally faced with suicidal issues coming up as most daring of all (Bashiru & Dagachi, 2013; Giwa-Amu, 2025) particularly among in-school Adolescents in AMAC.

Earlier strategies to combat this problem span from, public awareness campaigns led by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), to training of healthcare workers in identifying and managing suicide risk, among others (Oguntola, 2022). Several issues impeded the complete realisation of the benefits these initiatives were designated to provide. As a result, there was a persistent and increasing worry regarding the practical application of mental health support for adolescents within school settings. This worry heightened when reports from the National Bureau of Statistics of 2017 showed the prevalence of suicidal attempts and actions in the Federal Capital Territory to be 196, while that from the thirty-six states in Nigeria summed up to 333 (Alkassim, 2021). A substantial lack of clarity existed regarding how well a specific treatment can reduce suicidal thoughts, a gap this research sort to fill. As a result, the issues on the Efficacy of the Reality Therapy on in-school Adolescents susceptible to Suicidal Ideation, as well as, if there will be a different effect on students based on their PSES, was the focal point of this study.

### **Empirical Studies**

Studies have shown that the application of the Reality Therapy reduces thoughts of suicide. An example is; Yarahmadi, et al. (2019), in their study titled; Effect of group psychotherapy in light of Glasser approach on risky behaviour, engaged a semi-experimental design method. All the patients at the correctional and rehabilitation center were the research population of which 24 clients were selected and assigned randomly to the experiment and control groups. While the experiment group received group psychotherapy in Reality therapy for ten 90-minute sessions per week, the control group was without any interventions. Findings showed a significant difference between experiment and control group in risky behaviours. Another study by Jahromi and Fekri (2019) titled; The effectiveness of Reality Therapy theory on self-harm behaviours and functions in high school students in Shiraz, carried out in Iran, they had a sample of 30 students (of which 15 each were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups). They adopted a semi-experimental methodology with a pretest, posttest design and a control group. The statistical population included female high school first year students from (S) high school in Shiraz in the academic year of 2017/2018. The experimental group received eight (8) minute training sessions based on the concepts of Reality Therapy. Findings showed that Reality Therapy training reduced the students plan to harm themselves.

Researches have shown that Parents' Socio-Economic Status have a positive relationship with Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents. An example is that of Begum, et al. (2018), in their study titled; Parental socio-economic position and suicidal ideation among adolescents in rural Bangladesh, with a sample of 2,476 in-school adolescents, aged 14-19 years, from a rural community of Bangladesh, which were selected randomly in 2013, and used a cross-sectional survey research method. Findings showed that there was an association of parental socio-economic position with Suicidal Ideation. In addition, Sanggu, et al. (2022), in their study titled; The Impact of household economic deterioration caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and socioeconomic status on suicidal behaviours among in-school adolescents: A cross-sectional study using 2020 Korea youth Risk Behaviour Web-based Survey Data, engaged a sample of 54,948 middle and high school students. Findings showed that low Socio-Economic Status and Economic Deterioration were significantly associated with suicidal behaviours among in-school Adolescents.

However, some researches revealed that Parents' Socio-Economic Status have no relationship with Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents. Such is a study by Murray (2017) titled; The relationship between parental socioeconomic status, race, and adolescent suicidal ideation. Data was acquired from Wave I of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, which represented a national sample of 20,000 adolescents in the 7th through 12th grade during years 1994 to 1995. Findings showed that there was no significant relationship between household income and adolescent suicidal ideation. Raschke, et al. (2022), in their study titled; Socio economic factors associated with suicidal behaviours in South Korea: Systematic review on the current state of evidence, performed a systematic review in Medline and Web of Science. A total of 53 studies were included in a descriptive synthesis. Findings could not verify the significance of parents' socio-economic factors on the reporting of Suicidal Ideation.

### **Research Questions**

Is there a difference in pretest and posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy?

Is there an interaction effect of treatment by PSES on the posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups.

### **Hypotheses**

There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy.

There is no significant interaction effect of treatment by PSES on the posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups.

### **Methodology**

The research design was a quasi-experiment that incorporated the pretest, posttest, and control group approach. This design investigated the cause and effect relationship through exposure of the subjects in the experimental group to a treatment condition. The design had two group, namely the experimental and the control groups. Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents was the dependent variable for this study. PSES (3 levels; low, middle, and high) was the intervening variable, not influenced by the researcher. The population of this study comprised all Senior Secondary two (SS2) students in the 30 public Senior Secondary day schools in AMAC, which were 12,400 students (5,381 male and 7,019 female). The sample for the study comprised 44 SS2 students from the public Senior Secondary day schools in AMAC, selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The data for the study was collected with the use of an instrument titled: "Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire for in-school Adolescents" (SIQA). The researcher adapted the instrument from Miller, et al. (1991), Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation (MSSI), which originally contained 18 items, but the items were adjusted to 25 to align with the objectives of this study. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The result revealed a reliability coefficient of 0.92. The value confirmed that the instrument was reliable. Two hundred questionnaire were administered to students (and collected after response) to obtain a

pretest data. The essence of the pretest was to establish those vulnerable to Suicidal Ideation. Those identified as having this problem received treatments with all participants that filled the questionnaire within the same class (intact class), but were not disclosed to others.

The Reality Therapy was conducted for a period of 6 weeks for 2 sessions per week, summing up to 12 sessions of 30 minutes per session. The objective of this therapy was to assist in-school Adolescents to recognise how their beliefs, perceptions of right and wrong and the choice they make, may affect them positively or negatively. The participants were exposed to the key principles of choice theory and its basic assumptions. They were also taught how to apply Reality Therapy mode of Wants, Doing, Evaluation, and Planning (WDEP) to enable them evaluate if what their thoughts and actions at present are truly leading them to their goals (of discarding suicidal thoughts). They were equally equipped with knowledge on how to make effective plans and choices, using Reality Therapy model of Simple, Attainable, Measureable, Immediate, and Committed to (SAMIC) for achieving healthy goals. The participants were thereafter, exposed to posttest after 6 weeks of treatment.

### Analysis

Data collected were tested with paired sample t-test, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical techniques. Hypothesis 1 was tested with paired sample t-test statistics, while Two-way ANOVA statistics was used to test Hypothesis 2, both at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

### Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy.

**Table 1: Paired Sample t-test of Difference in Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy.**

Reality Therapy:							
Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean Diff.	df	t-value	<i>p-value</i> ( Sig. 2-tailed)
Pretest	20	15.40	4.92	7.25	19	6.62	.000
Posttest	20	8.15	0.49				
$\alpha = .05,$ $p < .05$ Significant							

Table 1 showed the difference in the pretest and posttest Mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy. From the table, at pretest their Mean score was 15.40 with a Std. Dev. of 4.92 while at posttest the Mean score was 8.15 with a Std. Dev. of 0.49. There is a Mean Diff. of 7.25. The t-value = 6.62, this value is significant. The *p-value* is less than the alpha (.000 < .05), therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that, there was significant difference in the pretest and posttest Mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy. Suicidal Ideation was significantly greater (15.40 > 8.15) before the intervention.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment by PSES on the posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Posttest Mean Scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups by PSES.**

GROUPS	PSES	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
RT	Low	--	--	0
	Middle	26.9	3.9	15
	High	29.8	5.6	5
	Total	27.7	4.4	20
Control	Low	45.0	18.0	3
	Middle	41.6	10.9	20
	High	27.0	--	1
	Total	41.4	11.7	24

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics and the number of participants in each group according to their PSES, their mean values and standard deviations (Std. Dev.) at posttest. For RT Group; Low PSES (none of the participants were within this level); Middle PSES (N= 15, Mean = 26.9, Std. Dev. = 3.9); High PSES (N= 5, Mean = 29.8, Std. Dev. = 5.6). While the Control Group; Low PSES (N= 3, Mean = 45.0, Std. Dev. = 18.0); Middle PSES (N= 20, Mean = 41.6, Std. Dev. = 10.9); High PSES (N= 1, Mean = 27.0, Std. Dev. = -). The test for treatment by PSES interaction effect is presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Two-way ANOVA of Differences in Posttest Mean Scores between the Reality Therapy and Control Group by PSES**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2332.498	4	583.125	7.000	.000
Intercept	20534.003	1	20534.003	246.508	.000
Groups	106.051	1	106.051	1.273	.266
PSES	203.517	2	101.758	1.222	.306
Groups * PSES	230.385	1	230.385	2.766	.104
Error	3248.683	39	83.300		
Total	59902.000	44			
Corrected Total	5581.182	43			

$P > \alpha$ ; Not Significant

Table 3 showed an *F-Value* of 2.766 and a *P-Value* of .104. Testing at alpha level of 0.05, the *p-value* was greater than the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that “there is no significant interaction effects of treatment by PSES on the post-test mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups” was retained. Hence, the socio-economic status of the participants’ parents had no influence on the treatment.

---

## Discussion of Findings

The finding of hypothesis one revealed that there was significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Reality Therapy. This was a positive outcome, which indicated that the intervention (Reality Therapy) feasible played a key role in altering in-school Adolescents' intentions to harbour suicidal thoughts. Yarahmadi, et al. (2019), finding was in agreement with this finding, confirming that group psychotherapy that used the Reality Therapy approach reduced plans to engage in high-risk behaviours among the participants of the experimental group. The finding of Jahromi and Fekri (2019) further corroborated with this finding. Their study showed how the therapy reduced the students' self-harm functions, and had a significant positive effect on the stoppage of suicidal actions to cause self-harm. In summary, this study showed that the planned programme of using Reality Therapy on in-school Adolescents was a good strategy for reducing Suicidal Ideation among them.

Findings from hypothesis two revealed that there was no significant interaction effect of treatment by PSES on the posttest mean scores in Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents exposed to Treatment and Control Groups. This implied that irrespective of the participants' PSES (high, middle, or low) the treatments worked equally across the status. This result corroborated the finding of Murray (2017), whose study was on the relationship between parental socio-economic status, race, and adolescent Suicidal Ideation, with result, which showed that there was no significant relationship between household income and adolescent Suicidal Ideation. This finding further agreed with those in the study of Raschke, et al. (2022). In their research on socio-economic factors associated with suicidal behaviours in South Korea: Systematic review on the current state of evidence, it reported the insignificance of parents' socio-economic factors on Suicidal Ideation.

The finding of this study however, was at variance with those carried out by Begum, et al. (2018). Their research showed the positive association of parental socio-economic position with Suicidal Ideation. Also at variance with the findings of this study was the study by Sanggu, et al. (2022), whose findings showed that economic deterioration and low socio-economic status were significantly associated with suicidal behaviours among in-school Adolescents. This study was an indication that the Reality Therapy could be effectively used by counsellors to reduce Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents irrespective of their PSES.

## Implications for Counselling

1. Counsellors should engage in adequate training in the theory and methods of the Reality Therapy, alongside regular supervision, for its effective implementation.
2. Counsellors should regularly incorporate the use of the principles and techniques of the Reality Therapy to address specific challenges and opportunities presented by different economic realities, fostering empowerment within realistic boundaries among in-school Adolescents with varying parental economic backgrounds. They should be accurately aware of how socio-economic factors shape the availability of choices, unmet needs, and overall experiences of these adolescents.

3. In consideration of in-school Adolescents with high, middle, and low PSES, counsellors should address various issues. For those with low socio-economic background: address material needs, focus on strength and resilience developed in the face of adversity, develop realistic goals, explore vocational skills and opportunities, evaluate how they are coping with stigma and social comparisons, and the likes. While for those with higher socio-economic background: address pressure and expectations, explore meaning and purpose beyond materialism, address potential entitlement or lack of empathy, as well as how well they are coping with parental expectations and control.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the findings of this study revealed that Reality Therapy was effective in reducing Suicidal Ideation among in-school Adolescents in AMAC. The therapy was also effective in reducing Suicidal Ideation irrespective of PSES. This meant that irrespective of the participants' PSES, the treatments worked equally well.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The Reality Therapy should be used for students identified as engaging in self-harm and risky behaviours so as to avoid the actualisation of likely suicidal actions.
2. School counsellors should encourage parents to spend more quality time with their wards, and support them physically and emotionally, irrespective of their financial standing in the society. As such, suicidal thoughts that can easily degenerate to suicidal actions can be reduced, or eliminated from their minds.

## **References**

- Alkassim, B. (2021, November 18). More Nigerian youths are committing suicide, Lawmakers lament. *Daily Trust Newspapers*. <https://dailytrust.com/more-nigerian-youths-are-committing-suicide-lawmakers-lament>
- Bashiru, S. & Dagachi A. M. (2013). Migration and development of Abuja: An Evaluation. *Social Science Research Network*, 1-48. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN\\_ID2248168\\_code2034279.pdf?abstract=224816](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID2248168_code2034279.pdf?abstract=224816)
- Begum, A., Viitasara, E., Soares, J., Rahman, A. K. M. F. & Macassa, G. (2018). Parental socio-economic position and suicidal ideation among adolescents in rural Bangladesh. *Journal of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences*, 4: 10-18.
- Belmont Behavioral Health System (BBHS) (2023). *Causes, signs, and effects of suicidal ideation*. 4200 Monument Road, Philadelphia, PA 19131. <https://www.belmontbehavioral.com/disorders/suicidal-ideation/causes-effects/>
- Giwa-Amu, F. C. (2025). *Efficacy of Reality and Cognitive Behavioural therapies on Suicidal Ideation among in-school adolescents in Abuja Municipal Area Council*. An unpublished Ph.D thesis at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.
- Ikwuba, A. (2011). Curtailing mental mortality among rural Nigerian women through poverty alleviation. *Nigerian Journal of Health Education*, 15 (1): 250-259.



- Jahromi, N. Z. & Fekri, K. (2019). The effectiveness of Reality Therapy theory on self-harm behaviours and functions in high school students in Shiraz. *Journal of Education Experiences*, 1 (2): 29-42.
- Miller, I. V., Norman, W. H., Bishop, S. B. & Dow, M. G. (1991). *The Modified Scale for Suicidal Ideation (MSSI)*. Department of psychiatry and human behaviour, Brown University and Butler hospital, America.
- Murray, K. S. (2017). *The relationship between parental socioeconomic status, race, and adolescent suicidal ideation*. A Thesis work. Carolina Digital Repository. University libraries.
- Nunez, K. (2021). *What is Reality Therapy and Choice Theory?* <https://www.healthline.com/health/reality-therapy#when-is-it-used>
- Oguntola, S. (2022, May 26). The president, Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria (APN), Professor James Obindo, in this interview with Sade Oguntola x-rays. *Admin News*. <https://www.apn.org.ng/news-left-sidebar.html>
- Owosina, T. (2020). *Who is an adolescent?* <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/who-adolescent-tayo-owosina>
- Raschke, N., Mohsenpour, A., Aschentrup, L., Fischer, F. & Wrona, K. J. (2022). Socioeconomic factors associated with suicidal behaviours in South Korea: Systematic review on the current state of evidence. *BMC Public Health*, 22: 129.
- Safai, Y. & West, M. (2022). *What is suicidal ideation?* Healthline Media UK Ltd., Brighton, UK. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/193026#summary>
- Sanggu, K., Yeri, J., Eun, H. P. & Seung-sik H. (2022). The impact of household economic deterioration caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and socioeconomic status on suicidal behaviours in adolescents: A cross-sectional study using 2020 Korea youth risk behaviour web-based survey data. *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health*, 55: 455-463.
- WebMD Editorial Contributors (2023). *What is Reality Therapy?* <https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/what-is-reality-therapy>
- World Health Organization (WHO) (2021). *Suicide*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide>
- Yarahmadi, H., Roomiyani, Z & Noormohammadi, H. (2019). Effect of group psychotherapy in light of Glasser approach on risky behaviour. *Journal of Research & Health*, 9 (2): 133-139.