

COUNSELLING FOR FAMILY WELL - BEING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper explores the pivotal role of counselling in promoting family wellbeing, moral development, and its broader impact on national stability and integration. Family wellbeing and moral development are foundational to the fabric of society, influencing the behaviours and values that contribute to cohesive communities and national unity. Counselling plays a crucial role in supporting families through challenges, fostering moral values, and ultimately enhancing societal stability. The journal begins by discussing the significance of family wellbeing and moral development in shaping individuals and communities. It emphasizes the importance of strong family units in fostering resilience and social cohesion, which are essential for national stability and integration. Moral development, facilitated through counselling, helps individuals and families clarify their values, build character, and navigate ethical dilemmas, contributing to a more cohesive and ethical society. Additionally, the paper explores the challenges faced by counselling services, such as cultural norms, resource limitations, and legal barriers, which can hinder effective support for families. Strategies for effective counselling are proposed, including integrated approaches that involve collaboration among counsellors, educators, community leaders, and policymakers. Community outreach programmes and educational workshops are highlighted as preventative measures to promote family wellbeing and moral development. This journal underscores the critical need for collaborative efforts across sectors to enhance counselling interventions aimed at promoting family wellbeing, moral development, and national stability and integration.

Keywords: Counselling, Family Wellbeing, Moral Development, National Stability, Integration

Introduction

Family wellbeing and moral development are foundational to the stability and integration of any society. Strong, healthy families contribute to cohesive communities and play a vital role in shaping individuals who uphold ethical values and contribute positively to society. Counselling, as a professional intervention, plays a crucial role in addressing family issues and fostering moral values within communities, thereby promoting national stability and integration.

Family wellbeing encompasses the physical, emotional, and psychological health of family members and the quality of relationships within the family unit. Well-functioning families provide a nurturing environment that supports individual growth, resilience, and overall societal stability. Research consistently shows that family relationships and the home environment significantly influence a person's behaviour, emotional development, and social interactions (Duncan et al., 2020). Moreover, family cohesion and positive parent-child relationships are associated with various positive outcomes, including better academic achievement, emotional stability, and lower rates of delinquency and substance abuse among children (Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Ryan & Claessens, 2013).

Moral development, on the other hand, refers to the process through which individuals develop attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours regarding right and wrong. It involves understanding ethical principles, making moral decisions, and applying values in daily life. Families play a critical role in shaping the moral development of individuals, serving as the primary context where moral values are taught and modelled (Rest et al., 1999).

Counselling provides a structured and supportive environment where individuals, couples, and families can address various challenges and develop strategies to improve their relationships and overall wellbeing. Family counselling, in particular, focuses on enhancing communication, resolving conflicts, and strengthening family bonds (Pinsof & Wynne, 1995). By addressing issues such as marital conflicts, parent-child relationships, and intergenerational dynamics, counselling helps families navigate transitions and crises more effectively. Counselling also plays a crucial role in promoting moral development within communities. Counsellors help individuals and families clarify their values, explore ethical dilemmas, and develop a sense of responsibility towards others. This process is essential for fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and integrity within communities, which are fundamental to national stability and integration.

National stability and integration depend significantly on the strength of families and communities. Strong family units contribute to social cohesion by instilling values that promote respect for diversity, tolerance, and unity (Petts et al., 2016). When families are supported through counselling, they are better equipped to resolve conflicts peacefully, support each other

through difficult times, and contribute positively to their communities.

Furthermore, moral development facilitated through counselling helps individuals become responsible citizens who uphold ethical values and contribute to the common good. These individuals are more likely to participate in civic activities, respect laws and institutions, and work towards societal goals (Hart et al., 2014). While counselling is effective in promoting family wellbeing and moral development, it faces several challenges. These include cultural and societal norms that may hinder individuals from seeking help, financial constraints that limit access to services, and legal barriers that may impede the effectiveness of interventions (UN Women, 2011; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015).

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to increase awareness, improve access to services, and advocate for policies that support family wellbeing and moral development. Counselling is a powerful tool for addressing family issues, promoting moral values, and enhancing national stability and integration. By supporting families through challenges and fostering ethical development within communities, counselling contributes to creating a cohesive society where individuals thrive and contribute positively to their communities and nation.

Understanding Family Wellbeing and Moral Development

Family wellbeing and moral development are critical components that shape individuals and communities, influencing societal stability and integration. Family wellbeing encompasses various dimensions of health and functioning within the family unit, including physical, emotional, and relational aspects. It is crucial for the overall health and development of family members, contributing to their resilience and ability to thrive in society (Ryan & Claessens, 2013).

Family Wellbeing: Family wellbeing is essential for creating a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters growth and development among its members. It includes factors such as economic stability, emotional support, positive relationships, and effective communication. Research indicates that family wellbeing significantly impacts individual health outcomes, educational attainment, and overall life satisfaction (Duncan et al., 2020). For instance, children raised in families with high levels of wellbeing are more likely to exhibit better emotional regulation, cognitive development, and social skills.

Economic stability within families also plays a crucial role in their overall wellbeing. Financial security allows families to meet their basic needs, access healthcare and educational resources, and plan. Economic stress, on the other hand, can contribute to family conflict, mental health issues, and negative developmental outcomes among children (Conger & Elder, 1994).

Moral Development: Moral development refers to the process through which individuals acquire and apply moral principles and values in their lives. It involves understanding concepts of right and wrong, making ethical decisions, and behaving in ways that align with personal and

societal norms. Families are primary agents of moral socialization, transmitting values, beliefs, and cultural practices to children from a young age (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). The family environment significantly influences moral development through parental modeling, discipline practices, and discussions about ethical issues. Positive parent-child relationships and effective communication are essential for fostering moral reasoning and empathy in children (Carlo & Edwards, 2016). These qualities contribute to their ability to form healthy relationships, make responsible decisions, and contribute positively to their communities.

Family wellbeing and moral development play pivotal roles in promoting national stability and integration. Strong, supportive families contribute to social cohesion by nurturing values such as respect, compassion, and cooperation among their members. These values are foundational to building trusting relationships and cohesive communities (Petts et al., 2016). Moreover, families that prioritize moral development help shape individuals who uphold ethical standards and contribute positively to society. Individuals with strong moral principles are more likely to engage in civic activities, respect laws, and participate in community initiatives that promote social justice and equality (Hart et al., 2014). This civic engagement is essential for maintaining democratic governance and promoting national unity.

The impact of family wellbeing and moral development extends beyond individual families to broader societal outcomes. Communities with strong family structures experience lower rates of crime, substance abuse, and social unrest, contributing to safer and more stable societies (Ryan & Claessens, 2013). On the contrary, dysfunctional family dynamics and inadequate moral development can lead to social problems, including juvenile delinquency, school dropout rates, and community disorganization (Conger & Elder, 1994).

Family wellbeing and moral development are integral to the stability and integration of societies. Strong families provide a foundation for individual growth and societal cohesion by promoting physical and emotional health, positive relationships, and ethical values. Counselling plays a vital role in supporting families, addressing challenges, and promoting moral development. By investing in family wellbeing and moral education, societies can enhance their resilience, promote social harmony, and foster national unity.

Role of Counselling in Promoting Family Wellbeing

Counselling plays a crucial role in promoting family wellbeing by providing support, resolving conflicts, and promoting moral development among family members. This section explores how counselling interventions contribute to enhancing family dynamics, fostering resilience, and promoting ethical values.

Emotional Support: Counselling provides a safe and supportive environment where families can express their emotions and discuss challenges they face. Families experiencing stress, grief, or other emotional difficulties benefit from counselling by receiving validation of their feelings and guidance on how to cope effectively (Beach & Whisman, 2012). For instance, families dealing with a crisis, such as the loss of a loved one or financial difficulties, can find solace and

develop strategies to manage their emotions through counselling sessions.

Conflict Resolution: Family conflicts are inevitable and can arise from various sources, including communication breakdowns, parenting differences, or unresolved issues from the past. Counselling helps families address these conflicts constructively by improving communication, fostering empathy, and finding mutually agreeable solutions (Pinsof & Wynne, 1995). Therapists facilitate discussions that promote understanding and reduce hostility, enabling family members to resolve conflicts and rebuild trust in their relationships.

Role of Counselling in Promoting Moral Development

Values Clarification: Counselling assists individuals and families in clarifying their values and ethical principles, which are essential for making decisions that align with their beliefs and goals (Carlo & Edwards, 2016). Therapists guide families through discussions that explore their values related to honesty, respect, responsibility, and fairness. By identifying and understanding their core values, family members can make informed choices and navigate ethical dilemmas more effectively.

Character Building: The role of counselling extends to building character and promoting moral growth among family members. Therapists help individuals develop qualities such as empathy, integrity, and resilience, which are essential for maintaining healthy relationships and contributing positively to society (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997). Through therapeutic activities and discussions, families learn how to support each other in developing these character strengths and apply them in their daily lives.

Counselling Approaches and Techniques

Counsellors employ various approaches and techniques to support families and promote moral development:

1. *Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT):* CBT techniques help families identify negative thought patterns and behaviours that contribute to conflict or emotional distress. By challenging and replacing these patterns with more positive and constructive ones, families can improve their coping strategies and problem-solving skills (Kazdin, 2000).
2. *Narrative Therapy:* This approach focuses on the stories and narratives that families construct about their lives and relationships. Counsellors help families reframe negative narratives and identify strengths and resources that can facilitate conflict resolution and promote moral growth (White & Epston, 1990).
3. *Family Systems Therapy:* This therapeutic approach examines the interactions and dynamics within the family system. Counsellors help families identify dysfunctional patterns of communication or behaviour that contribute to conflict and work towards creating healthier interactions and relationships (Bowen, 1978).

Benefits and Outcomes

The benefits of counselling for family wellbeing and moral development are numerous:

1. *Improved Communication:* Counselling enhances communication skills within families, promoting openness and understanding.
2. *Strengthened Relationships:* By resolving conflicts and addressing underlying issues, counselling helps families build stronger, more supportive relationships (Halford et al., 2010).
3. *Enhanced Resilience:* Families learn effective coping strategies and develop resilience in the face of challenges and adversity (Walsh, 2016).
4. *Promotion of Ethical Values:* Counselling facilitates the transmission of ethical values across generations, contributing to the moral development of children and adolescents (Damon & Killen, 2008).

Challenges in Counselling for Family Wellbeing and Moral Development

Counselling for family wellbeing and moral development faces several challenges that impact its accessibility, effectiveness, and overall support for families. These challenges include cultural and societal norms, resource limitations, and legal and institutional barriers.

Cultural and Societal Norms: Cultural attitudes and societal norms significantly influence family wellbeing and moral development. Different cultures may have varying perspectives on family dynamics, parenting styles, and moral values, which can impact the acceptance and effectiveness of counselling interventions. For instance, cultures that prioritize collectivism may value family cohesion and harmony over individual needs, potentially discouraging family members from seeking outside help for personal or relational issues (Chu, 2011). Moreover, cultural stigmas surrounding mental health and counselling services can create barriers to accessing support. In some cultures, seeking help from a therapist may be viewed as a sign of weakness or failure, leading individuals to avoid or delay seeking counselling until issues reach crisis levels (Choi & Cheung, 2016). Counsellors must navigate these cultural norms sensitively, respecting and understanding the values and beliefs that shape family dynamics and moral development.

Resource Limitations: Limited resources, including financial constraints and insufficient mental health infrastructure, pose significant challenges to the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services for families. In many communities, especially in low-income areas or rural regions, there may be a shortage of qualified mental health professionals and counselling facilities (WHO, 2017). This shortage can result in long waiting lists for services, inadequate follow-up care, and limited options for families seeking support.

Financial barriers also impact access to counselling services. Many families may not have adequate insurance coverage for mental health services or the financial means to pay for counselling out-of-pocket. As a result, they may be unable to access the support they need to

address family conflicts, mental health issues, or moral dilemmas effectively (UNICEF, 2020).

Legal and Institutional Barriers: Legal frameworks and institutional barriers can hinder the provision of counselling for family wellbeing and moral development. In some jurisdictions, regulations governing the practice of counselling and mental health services may be restrictive or unclear, making it challenging for counsellors to provide timely and effective support (American Counselling Association, 2020). Additionally, funding allocations and government policies may not prioritize mental health services, resulting in inadequate support for counselling programmes aimed at promoting family wellbeing and moral development (Smith et al., 2019).

Institutional barriers within healthcare systems, educational institutions, and community organizations can also limit access to counselling services. For example, bureaucratic procedures, administrative delays, and complex referral processes may deter families from seeking or receiving timely counselling support (WHO, 2018). Furthermore, stigma and discrimination within institutional settings can create additional barriers for families seeking help, particularly those from marginalized or minority backgrounds (APA, 2021).

Addressing Challenges and Moving Forward: Addressing the challenges in counselling for family wellbeing and moral development requires a multi-faceted approach involving policymakers, community leaders, and mental health professionals. Strategies to enhance accessibility and effectiveness include:

1. *Cultural Competence Training:* Providing counsellors with training in cultural competence and sensitivity to better understand and address diverse cultural norms and values within family systems (Hwang, 2006).
2. *Expansion of Mental Health Services:* Increasing funding and resources for mental health services, including counselling, to ensure that families have access to timely and affordable support (WHO, 2019).
3. *Advocacy and Policy Reform:* Advocating for policies that support mental health parity, improve access to counselling services, and address legal and regulatory barriers that hinder the provision of effective counselling (American Psychiatric Association, 2020).
4. *Community Engagement:* Engaging communities in conversations about mental health and challenging stigma to promote a supportive environment for families seeking counselling support (WHO, 2020).
5. *Collaboration Across Sectors:* Facilitating collaboration among healthcare providers, educators, social services, and community organizations to create integrated systems of support for families (Hawkins & Dollahite, 1997).

Counselling for family wellbeing and moral development is essential, it faces significant challenges related to cultural norms, resource limitations, and legal and institutional barriers. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts to enhance cultural competence,

expand mental health services, advocate for policy reform, and engage communities in supporting families' mental health needs.

Challenges and Considerations

Challenges to effective counselling strategies include funding limitations, cultural barriers, and stigma surrounding mental health. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts and advocacy to promote accessible, culturally sensitive counselling services for all families. Integrated approaches and preventative measures are essential for effective counselling in promoting family wellbeing and moral development. By collaborating with stakeholders, implementing community outreach programmes, and providing educational workshops, counsellors can support families in building resilience, enhancing communication, and promoting positive moral values.

Suggestions

1. *Incorporate Case Studies or Real-Life Examples:* Adding brief case studies or examples of counselling interventions can illustrate the practical impact of counselling on family well-being and moral development. For instance, highlight a scenario where counselling helped resolve marital conflicts or improved parent-child communication.
2. *Strengthen the Link to National Stability:* Deepen the connection between family wellbeing, moral development, and national stability. You could elaborate on how values nurtured in families, such as empathy and responsibility, translate into responsible citizenship, ultimately promoting societal harmony and reducing social vices.
3. *Expand on Counsellor Training and Capacity Building:* Emphasize the need for ongoing training of counsellors, particularly in culturally sensitive approaches. Discuss how building counsellors' capacity can improve the delivery of services and better address diverse family structures and values.
4. *Propose Community-Based Interventions:* Suggest implementing community-based counselling programs, such as family support groups, school-based counselling, or faith-based initiatives. These initiatives could increase accessibility and reduce stigma associated with seeking help.
5. *Include Policy Recommendations:* Recommend specific policy measures, such as subsidizing counselling services for low-income families, integrating counselling into schools and community centers, or launching awareness campaigns about the benefits of family counselling.

Conclusion

Counselling plays a vital role in promoting family wellbeing, moral development, and national stability and integration. By supporting families through challenges, promoting positive relationships, and fostering moral growth, counselling contributes to creating healthier and more resilient communities. Collaborative efforts from various sectors are essential to

overcoming challenges, expanding access to counselling services, and promoting the well-being of families across diverse cultural and social contexts. As we look to the future, it is crucial to continue advocating for mental health support, fostering partnerships among stakeholders, and promoting the value of counselling in enhancing family life and societal cohesion.

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