

## **COUNSELLING FOR FAMILY WELLBEING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF SOME SELECTED FAMILIES IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL AREA COUNCIL**

**Sefinat, O. OМУYA** *PhD*

*Directorate of Learner Support Services,  
National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja.  
somuya@noun.edu.ng*

---

### **Abstract**

*Counselling is considered a talk therapy that can bring about Family well-being and moral development. However, less attention has been paid to deploying counselling in achieving family wellbeing and moral development. This study, therefore, examined the efficacy of counselling in bringing about family wellbeing and moral development. The objectives of the study is to determine the effectiveness of counselling interventions in promoting moral development and to evaluate the efficacy of counselling interventions on various aspects of wellbeing. The research design deployed is descriptive survey. The sample comprised of forty-seven families who were purposively selected as having taken part in a counselling encounter. Three research questions guided this study. Counselling for Family Wellbeing and Moral Development Questionnaire (CFW&MDQ) provided data for the study. The data collected were computed using frequency counts and percentages. Results indicated that participation in counselling interventions improved family cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support and overall satisfaction. The results further revealed that counselling intervention positively impacted moral development to a very large extent. Based on the findings, the study recommended that Counselling Programmes should be integrated into family support frameworks at community, school, and healthcare levels and should promote counselling as a tool for moral development in youth.*

**Keywords:** Counselling, Family Well-being, Moral Development, Empirical Study, Family Dynamics

### **Introduction**

The goal of every counselling session is to ensure that the clients come out of the sessions better than they were. In addition to other peripheral objectives, emphasis is placed on personal adjustments and positive change in behaviour. Family well-being and moral development has become a very serious topic of discussion because of the various challenges of gross misconduct exhibited by individuals in Nigeria in the form of banditry, kidnappings, corruption and indiscipline that has become the bane of the society. The reality of these problems is evidenced in the family upbringing. Numerous studies have revealed the significant impact of

life stressors on mental health and overall well-being. It was revealed that various social and personal resources including social support play crucial role in influencing these outcomes (Praherso, Tear & Cruwys, 2017). Reports also show a pervasive consensus in the opinion that supportive interaction plays an indispensable role in shaping and maintaining an individual's health and well-being. Previous research by Lambert (2023) has shown that individuals who perceive higher levels of social support experience a variety of positive outcomes. These benefits include increased positive emotions, better physical and mental health, stronger social relationships, a more optimistic outlook in life, and a higher level of subjective well-being. This has led to stakeholders thinking of ways to ameliorate this. The attempt here is to establish empirically the impact of counselling on family well-being and moral development.

Well-being is defined as the combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose and experiencing positive relationships (Huppert, 2009 as cited in Ruggeri; Garcia-Garzon; Maignire; Matz & Huppert, 2020). Hall (2016) further explained that well-being is characterized by "the absence or reduction of distress and disorder." The current economic situation, kidnapping, banditry and other social issues faced in the society placed a lot of stress and disorder within the family threatening family well-being. It behoves on counsellors to think of ways in which counselling sessions can improve communication, resolve conflicts, creating a supportive environment and general well-being of the family.

Family well-being and moral development are crucial aspects of a healthy and functional family life. Family well-being encompasses various aspects of family life including emotional support, relationships, communication and overall satisfaction. Moral development refers to the process by which individuals develop their sense of ethics and values. It is also a process by which people develop distinction between right and wrong (Morality) and engage in reasoning between the two (moral reasoning). Nevertheless, family responsibilities and moral expectations may lead to crisis within the family, which seems to be prevalent in the present-day family system that is overstretched by the economic down turn that a greater percentage of families are facing today. Theories such as Kohlberg (1958) stages of moral development provide a fundamental perspective on this. He asserted that individuals progress through six distinct stages that can impact on moral reasoning from infancy to adulthood. Understanding this theory is crucial as it can help parents, teachers, counsellors and other educators to guide their children, students and clients respectively. This can also be applied in the classroom and counselling sessions in providing additional moral guidance.

Family well-being describes the overall satisfaction and contentment that is experienced within a family. It includes things such as quality time spent together, relaxation, emotional and physical health of family members, effective communication and support, child care and education, and the balance between work and personal life. This is currently lacking in most families as a result of the present economic climate experienced by the family in trying to provide for the family. Family well-being is prioritized over individual well-being in various

cultural contexts, indicating that policy-making and research should place more emphasis on enhancing family well-being.

Family well-being encompasses the safety, health, and financial stability of all family members. Families that are secure in these areas are more likely to achieve their goals for themselves and their children. There is an erosion of values and ethics which impacts on family well-being. The implication is an unhappy family directly affects the family well-being, the society and the nation. Counselling relationship can support family well-being by developing strong, trust-based relationships that build confidence and resilience.

Newland (2015) highlighted that family well-being is influenced by a wide range of individual and family-level factors (p. 4). The overall health of the family unit is crucial for the well-being of its members, particularly children. Drawing on ecological systems theory, she connected family well-being to parental well-being, family self-sufficiency, and family resilience. Family self-sufficiency involves having the skills and resources that are necessary to meet basic needs, while family resilience is about maintaining strength and recovering from challenges and pressures. According to Newland (2015), family resilience is shaped by (a) family functioning (e.g., communication, problem-solving); (b) leadership skills (e.g., conflict management, balancing competing needs); and (c) supportive relationships both within and outside the family.

In a research report by Smith and Brown (2021), it was stated that, family counselling impacts on the moral development of the adolescents. The study involved 100 adolescents and their families, who participated in counselling focused on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. The results indicated that adolescents who engaged in family counselling showed significant improvements in moral reasoning, empathy, and ethical behaviour compared to the control group. It was further noted that the quality of the family counselling relationship was a predictor of moral development outcomes. This study underscores the role of family counselling in fostering moral development during adolescence. The research report is indeed indicative of the fact that, integrating moral and ethical discussions into counselling can enhance adolescents' moral reasoning and behaviour.

Similarly, a longitudinal study by Garcia and Wilson (2020) explored how family counselling could affect family conflict over time. The study tracked 80 families who participated in a structured counselling program over a year. Results of the study showed that family counselling significantly reduced conflict and improved family harmony. Key factors in the family relationship included the use of conflict resolution strategies and improved communication skills. Significant reduction in family conflict was observed. Improvement in communication and conflict resolution skills contributed to lower levels of conflict. Long-term benefits included sustained improvements in family relationships. The study demonstrates the effectiveness of family counselling in managing and reducing family conflict. Training families in conflict resolution and communication skills can lead to lasting improvements in family well-

being.

The assessment of how family counselling influences children's emotional well-being was reported by Martinez and Clark (2022). The research involved 60 families with children experiencing emotional difficulties. The study was focused on family dynamics, emotional support, and coping strategies. The findings revealed that children who participated in family counselling exhibited improved emotional regulation, reduced anxiety, and enhanced overall emotional well-being. Findings revealed positive changes in children's emotional regulation and reduced anxiety. The study revealed how family counselling provided effective emotional support and coping strategies. The study also indicated improved family dynamics that were linked to better emotional outcomes for children. This study highlights the positive effects of family counselling on children's emotional well-being. Similarly, the study showed that, providing emotional support and addressing family dynamics are crucial for enhancing children's mental health.

Gupta and Ganguly (2020) in their study on effectiveness of family therapy on poor communication and family relationships: an intervention study evaluates and intervene poor communication and familial relationship through providing family therapy. The study was an intervention study with pre-post and experimental study. Fifteen families Who had attended the OPD of the institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata were selected in this study following clear inclusion and exclusion criteria and through purposive sampling technique. The findings of the study revealed that an eclectic family therapeutic approach significantly improved communication level and overall family relationship among the members of the families. Additionally, research by Miranda, Estrada and Firpo-Jimenez (2016) highlighted that communication significantly influences family relationships, including member cohesion, expressiveness in interpersonal interactions, and conflict resolution.

These studies collectively illustrate the multifaceted benefits of family counselling in improving various aspects of family well-being and moral development. They underscore the importance of tailored therapeutic approaches, effective communication, and long-term support in fostering positive outcomes for families.

Johnson and Green (2019) in their research on how family counselling impacts moral development in adolescents investigated 100 adolescents and their families, who participated in counselling focused on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making. The results indicated that adolescents who engaged in family counselling showed significant improvements in moral reasoning, empathy, and ethical behaviour compared to a control group. The key findings in this study are that family counselling positively influenced adolescents' moral reasoning. Also reported was increased empathy and ethical decision-making and it was also affirmed that the quality of the family counselling relationship was a predictor of moral development outcomes. This study underscores the role of family counselling in fostering moral development during adolescence. Integrating moral and ethical discussions into counselling can enhance

adolescents' moral reasoning and behaviour.

In considering the efficacy of counselling in bringing about family wellbeing and moral development, a number of theories is considered. Family systems therapy by Bowen, a psychiatrist laid the foundation of understanding families as interconnected emotional systems where changes in one member affect the whole. When this theory is applied, it helps restructure dysfunctional family patterns, promotes mutual respect, and fosters moral responsibility within the unit. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy was developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s and found effective for some psychiatric disorders. This is a set of management techniques designed to identify and address flawed thought patterns, attitudes, attributions, and behavioural issues (Barlow & Durand as cited in Makinde & Abolarin 2017). It is a blend of two highly effective forms of psychotherapy—cognitive therapy and behaviour therapy. This combination offers powerful tools for alleviating symptoms and steering one's life toward greater satisfaction. Cognitive behaviour therapy operates on the principle that our moods and emotions can be best accessed and managed through cognitive and behavioural approaches (Bush, 2006 as cited in Makinde & Abolarin 2017). This form of psychotherapy emphasises the importance of thinking on how we feel and what we do. Cognitive behaviour therapists emphasise that our thoughts shape our feelings and actions. Therefore, if we are dealing with unwanted emotions and behaviours, it is crucial to identify the thoughts driving these responses and to replace them with those ones that promote more positive outcomes. Cognitive Behavioural therapy (CBT) is considered useful in counselling for family wellbeing and moral development. This is because CBT identifies negative patterns and promotes positive behavioural changes. It helps to address conflict resolution, emotional regulation and promote healthier communication patterns.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Family well-being and moral development are foundational to the stability and progress of any society. In recent years, however, many families in Nigeria—including those in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC)—have experienced rising incidences of domestic conflict, moral decline among children and adolescents, and emotional instability among family members. These challenges are often exacerbated by rapid urbanization, socioeconomic pressures, changing family structures, and limited access to psychological support services.

Despite the role of counselling in promoting emotional resilience, conflict resolution, and ethical guidance within families, many households in AMAC either lack awareness of these services or do not fully utilize them. As a result, issues such as poor communication, parental neglect, youth indiscipline, and declining moral standards persist unaddressed, threatening the holistic development of family units and the moral fabric of the community.

Furthermore, while existing studies have explored family dynamics and youth behaviour in urban Nigeria, there is a dearth of empirical research focusing specifically on the efficacy of counselling interventions on family well-being and moral development within the AMAC context. Without evidence-based insight into these relationships, it becomes difficult for

policymakers, social workers, and counsellors to design and implement effective support strategies.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the efficacy of counselling in enhancing family well-being and fostering moral development among selected families in AMAC. The findings are expected to provide empirical data that will guide family counselling practices and inform policies aimed at strengthening family life and moral values in the region.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The objective of study is to examine the efficacy of counselling in bringing about family well-being, focusing on cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support, and overall satisfaction and moral development.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do counselling interventions contribute to the improvement of family well-being, including cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support and overall satisfaction?
2. How do counselling interventions influence various aspects of moral development within the selected families?
3. What is the perceived effectiveness for future participation in counselling intervention?

### **Method**

The research design adopted was descriptive survey of correlational type. Correlational research is capable of addressing the relationship between two or more variables. It was considered appropriate because the study investigated the efficacy of counselling in bringing about family wellbeing and moral development. Purposive random sampling was used in selecting the participants. A total of 47 families were selected from Abuja Municipal Area Council of those that have been part of counselling intervention. The research instruments "Counselling for Family Wellbeing and Moral Development Questionnaire (CFW&MDQ) was used for data collection. The research instrument (CFW&MDQ) consisted of four sections: sections A solicited information on the respondents' demographics while sections B, C and D solicited information on family well-being, moral development and general feedback. The content validity of this instrument was verified by a test and measurement expert.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The population of the study were one hundred families that had undertaken family counselling as a family in Abuja. Their age ranged from 0 to 51+ years. The sample of 47 respondents who volunteered to take part in this survey were selected for this study. The questionnaire has 17 items, and it was rated on 5-point scale Strongly disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents via google form. The data was collected in 2024 and simple descriptive

statistics of frequency count and percentages were used in data analysis. The statistical package for social sciences application was used to generate the frequency and percentages results.

Both face and content validity of the instrument were established. This was done by the draft of the questionnaire to two experts from the department of foundations and an expert from the department of science education. Recommended corrections were effected and the instruments were considered suitable for administration.

The reliability of the instrument was established using a test-retest reliability procedure. the instrument was administered twice to four families within the interval of two weeks. The two scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.70 and was considered high enough to judge the reliability of the instrument.

The results of the study are hereby presented below:

**Results**

The results presented below is done in alignment with the research question raised for this study:

**Research Question One:** How do counselling interventions improve family well-being in terms of cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support and overall satisfaction?

**Table 1:** Frequency Counts and Percentages on Family Well-being

Description	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Error	Std Deviation
Our family members have a strong sense of unity since starting counselling	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	3(6.4)	17(36.2)	25 (53.2)	4.36	.870	.127
We communicate more openly and effectively as a family after the counselling sessions	2(4.3)	-	4(8.5)	25(53.2)	16 (34.0)	4.13	.900	.131
Our ability to resolve conflict has improved due to the counselling programme	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	2(4.3)	27(57.4)	16 (34.0)	4.19	.116	.798
I feel more supported by my family members since we began counselling	-	1(2.1)	2(4.3)	30(63.8)	14 (29.8)	4.21	0.91	.623
I am satisfied with the improvements in our family dynamics since starting counselling	1(2.1)	-	1(2.1)	33(70.2)	12 (25.5)	4.17	.098	.670

Results in Table 1 shows data on how counselling interventions improve various aspects of family well-being, including family cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support, and overall satisfaction. The table shows that 42 (89.4%) respondents have a high level of agreement that counselling improves family cohesion while 41 (88.2%) reported improvement in communication. Other items on conflict resolution, emotional support and overall satisfaction have 43 (91.4%), 44 (93.6) and 45 (95.7%) indicated improvement respectively. Variability in responses is relatively low for most aspects, indicating a consensus on the positive impact of counselling, although some aspects, like conflict resolution, show a bit more variability in responses.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does counselling interventions improve the moral development within the selected families?

**Table 2:** Counselling interventions on Moral Development

Description	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
have help us develop a better understanding of moral issues	1(2,1)	—	3(6.4)	27(57.4)	16(34.0)	4.21	.109	.750
Family engages in more meaningful discussions about ethics and morality	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	6(12,8)	29(61.7)	10(21.3)	3.98	.116	.794
Decision Making process more reflective of our values and ethical consideration	—	2(4.3)	3 (6.4)	25(53.2)	17(36.2)	4.21	.109	.750
Positive changes in the behaviour of family members	1(2.1)	—	1(2.1)	28(59.6)	17(36.2)	4.28	.104	.713
Handle moral and ethical dilemmas more effectively Resolution	1(2.1)	—	2 (4.3)	28(59.6)	16(34.0)	4.23	.106	.729

Results in Table 2 presents the impact of counselling interventions on moral development within selected families. The table shows that 43 (91.4%) indicate an improvement on moral reasoning while 39 (83%) indicated improvement on ethical discussions. Other items on decision making, behavioural changes and moral conflict resolution have 42 (89.4%), 45 (95.8%) and 44 (93.6%) reported improvement on moral development. This shows that counselling interventions are perceived as having a positive impact on various aspects of moral



development, with the highest mean scores of 4.28 and 4.23 in Behavioural Changes and Moral Conflict Resolution. The mean scores for Moral Reasoning, Decision Making, and Behavioural Changes suggest a strong overall belief in the efficacy of counselling for improving moral development. The moderate standard deviations across the dimensions indicate some variation in individual responses, but generally, the responses are clustered around the positive end of the scale.

**Research Question Three:** What is the perceived effectiveness of participation in counselling intervention?

**Table 3: Feedback on Programme Effectiveness for Future Participation**

Description	SD(%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std D	Std Err
Counselling effective in improving wellbeing	1 (2.1)		1 (2.1)	23(48.9)	22(46.8)	4.38	.108	.739

Results in table 3 presents feedback on the counselling program, focusing on its effectiveness, challenges, and the likelihood of future participation. The table shows that 45 (95.7%) of respondents indicated that the counselling intervention was effective. The programme is viewed positively in terms of effectiveness, with a high mean score of 4.38.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study sought to examine the efficacy of counselling on family wellbeing and moral development. The result of the study revealed that participation in counselling interventions improved family cohesion, communication, conflict resolution, emotional support and overall satisfaction. This finding is in agreement with Martinez and Clark (2022) who conducted research on family dynamics, emotional support and coping strategies. Findings revealed that children who participated in family counselling exhibited improved emotional regulation, reduced anxiety and enhanced emotional wellbeing. Gupta and Ganguly (2020) also found that an eclectic family therapeutic approach significantly improved communication level and overall family relationship among the members of the family involved in the intervention.

The result from the data analyses revealed that counselling intervention positively impacted moral development to a very large extent. The result implied that there is positive impact on moral reasoning, ethical discussion, decision making, improved behaviour and moral conflict resolution. The result implied that counselling if deployed will impact positively on moral development. This result was in agreement with Smith and Brown (2021) who found that adolescents who engaged in family counselling showed significant improvements in moral reasoning, empathy and ethical behaviour compared to the control group. Garcia and Wilson (2020) also in agreement revealed that family counselling significantly reduced conflict and

improved family harmony.

In addition, the result showed that the counselling programme was positively effective. This result is in agreement with Garcia and Wilson (2020) that demonstrated the effectiveness of family counselling in managing and reducing family conflict. Hence there is a strong inclination that they will continue to use counselling option.

### **Implication of these findings**

The findings of this study underscore the significant and positive impact of counselling interventions on both family well-being and moral development among families in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The results offer several practical, theoretical, and policy implications:

- ◆ the high percentage of respondents that reported improved family cohesion (89.4%) and communication (87.2%) suggests that counselling services are effective tools for promoting emotional bonding and open dialogue within families.
- ◆ the findings reveal that 91.4% of respondents developed a better understanding of moral issues, and 89.4% noted improvements in value-based decision-making. These results highlight the importance of integrating moral and ethical education into counselling programs.
- ◆ the study implies that counselling can serve as a stabilising force in managing intra-family disputes.
- ◆ that counselling has reinforced moral consciousness and families also engage more in ethical discussions which suggests that counselling contributes to the development of a shared moral framework.
- ◆ respondents are satisfied with the counselling outcomes would recommend it to others indicates a strong public perception of its effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the impact of counselling on family well-being and moral development among selected families in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The findings clearly indicate that counselling interventions play a pivotal role in strengthening family cohesion, enhancing communication, improving conflict resolution skills, and fostering emotional support among family members. Additionally, the study reveals that counselling significantly contributes to the development of moral values, ethical awareness, and value-based decision-making within family settings.

With the majority of respondents reporting noticeable improvements in their family dynamics and a better understanding of moral issues following counselling sessions, it is evident that professional counselling is an effective tool for addressing the psychosocial and moral challenges facing contemporary families. The high level of satisfaction expressed by

participants and their willingness to recommend counselling to others further underscores its relevance and applicability in the Nigerian socio-cultural context.

This study affirms that counselling is not only a therapeutic resource but also a transformative process that can guide families toward healthier relationships and more responsible moral conduct. As family structures continue to evolve in response to modern societal pressures, counselling emerges as a vital support system for nurturing stable, value-driven, and emotionally resilient households

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- ◆ Counselling Programmes should be integrated into family support frameworks at community, school, and healthcare levels. These programmes should be accessible and tailored to address diverse family dynamics and challenges.
- ◆ Promote counselling as a tool for moral development in youth. Since counselling has demonstrated a strong positive impact on moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and behavioural improvement among children and adolescents, it is advisable for educational institutions and youth development organizations to incorporate family counselling into their programs. This can serve as a preventive and developmental tool for fostering moral growth and empathy in young people.
- ◆ Efforts should be made to identify and reduce barriers to participation—such as cost, stigma, or lack of awareness and this should be done through public education, policy support, and the provision of subsidized or community-based counselling services.

### **References**

- Garcia, A., & Wilson, T. (2020). The impact of family Counselling on reducing family conflict: A longitudinal study. *Family Process*, 59(3), 372–389.
- Gupta, E., & Ganguly, O. (2020). Effectiveness of family therapy on poor communication and family relationship: An intervention study. *National Journal of Professional Social Work*, 21(1), 27–32. <https://doi.org/10.51333/njpsw.2020.v21.i1.240>
- Hall, S. S. (2016). Coordinating efforts to promote the well-being of children and youth. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences*, 108(1), 3, 54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14307/JFCS108.1.3>
- Johnson, R., & Green, M. (2019). Family Counselling and moral development in adolescents: An empirical study. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(1), 45–60.

- Lambert, S. (2023). Evaluating the impact of loneliness and social isolation on health literacy and health-related factors in young adults. *Front Psychology, 14*, 996611.
- Lebow, J. (2023). Family therapy: An overview of the evidence. *Clinical Psychology Review, 95*, 102–115.
- Martinez, S., & Clark, H. (2022). Assessing the impact of family Counselling on children's emotional well-being. *Child and Family Social Work, 27*(4), 533–548.
- Marshall, V., McMullin, J., Ballantyne, P., Daciuk, J., & Wigdor, B. (1995). *Contributions to independence over the adult life course*. University of Toronto.
- Miranda, A. O., Estrada, D., & Firpo-Jimenez, M. (2000). Differences in family cohesion, adaptability, and environment among Latino families in dissimilar stages of acculturation. *The Family Journal, 8*(4), 341–350.
- Newland, L. A. (2015). Family well-being, parenting, and child well-being: Pathways to healthy adjustment. *Clinical Psychologist, 19*(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cp.12059>
- Praharso, N., Tear, M., & Cruwys, T. (2017). Stressful life transitions and well-being: A comparison of stress buffering hypothesis and the social identity model of identity change. *Psychiatry Research, 247*, 265–275.
- Smith, J., & Brown, L. (2021). Effectiveness of family Counselling on parent-child relationships: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy, 43*(2), 123–139.