

## **EFFECT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY ON VICE - PREVENTION AMONG BASIC SCHOOL PUPILS: A CASE STUDY OF KABBA/BUNU LGA, KOGI STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the effect of conflict resolution strategies and social learning theory on vice prevention among basic school pupils in Kabba/Bunu Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State, Nigeria. With rising concerns over social vices such as bullying, substance abuse, and gang involvement among young learners, this study investigates the effectiveness of integrating behavioural theories into the educational system to curb these issues. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis from selected schools, teachers, and community stakeholders. Grounded in the principles of Conflict Resolution Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Attachment Theory, and Resilience Theory, the findings reveal that learners exposed to conflict management training and positive role models exhibit fewer behavioural problems. The study underscores the significance of teacher training, peer mentorship, emotional support, and community involvement. It concludes with recommendations for replicating this holistic approach across other regions and educational levels to promote behaviour modification and personality development.*

**Keywords:** Basic School Pupils, Conflict Resolution, Social Learning, Vice Prevention

### **Introduction**

The early stages of adolescence are critical, as academic pressures, social complexities, and significant physical and psychological changes mark this period. During this time, many basic school pupils face various challenges, including the temptation of engaging in vices such as substance abuse, bullying, and other inappropriate behaviours. The rising prevalence of social issues like bullying, substance use, truancy, and gang involvement among basic school

pupils in Nigeria poses a considerable risk to their academic success and social development. In Kabba/Bunu LGA of Kogi State, educators and policymakers have raised concerns about pupils' vulnerability to these challenges.

This research utilises a qualitative case study approach to examine how integrating behavioural theories through counselling in school curricula can positively influence pupils' behaviour. Counselling is crucial in providing pupils with essential support and guidance to navigate challenges. In a safe and confidential environment facilitated by trained counsellors, pupils can address their concerns, develop coping strategies, and enhance their emotional well-being. By targeting key factors contributing to vices, such as low self-esteem, family conflicts, or peer pressure, counselling empowers students to make informed decisions and strengthens their resilience in managing daily difficulties (Vipene & Haliru, 2022; Ibrahim et al., 2024). The focus of this study is not only on the theoretical application of counselling but also on practical interventions that promote emotional intelligence, empathy, and pro-social behaviour. This research assesses the effectiveness of these strategies within the sociocultural context of Kabba/Bunu LGA. It aims to offer a replicable framework for behaviour modification at the basic education level.

**Common Vices and the need for effective prevention strategies**

In the context of learners, "vices" refer to behaviours or practices considered harmful, unethical, or immoral. These actions often disrupt the learning process, hinder personal growth, and, if left unaddressed, can escalate into more serious problems. In order to address these vices, it is essential to implement educational programs, foster a positive school culture, and establish support systems that guide students towards making healthier and more ethical decisions. Common vices exhibited by students include the following:

- ◆ Harassing includes repeated, aggressive behaviour aimed at intimidating, harming, or controlling another student. It can take various forms, including physical bullying (such as hitting), verbal bullying (such as name-calling), and social or cyber bullying (such as spreading bits of force information).
- ◆ Substance Misuse refers to the illegal or harmful use of alcohol, drugs, and other substances. Misuse includes experimenting with or regularly using drugs (whether prescription, recreational, nicotine, or alcohol), which is considered substance misuse.
- ◆ Malingering involves being absent from school without a tenable excuse or permission. This behaviour leads students to miss classes, take unauthorised absences, or leave school grounds without consent, negatively affecting their academic performance and disrupting learning.
- ◆ Sexual Wrongdoing refers to inappropriate or illegal sexual behaviour. It includes harassment, coercion, and other non-consensual sexual acts such as inappropriate touching, sexual harassment, and any form of sexual behaviour that is improper for the

context.

- ◆ Discourtesy and Rebellion encompass behaviours that show a lack of respect for teachers, peers, or school rules. Discourtesy includes rude behaviour, verbal insubordination, failure to follow instructions, disruptive actions in class, the use of disrespectful language, and noncompliance with authority.
- ◆ Academic dishonesty and cheating are forms of dishonesty in the academic environment. Dishonesty includes cheating on examinations, plagiarism, falsifying information, copying another pupil's work, using unauthorised materials during assessments, and submitting someone else's work as one's own.
- ◆ Burglary is the deliberate taking of someone else's property without permission. Burglary can occur in various settings, including schools, stealing personal items, vandalising school property, or shoplifting.
- ◆ Placing bets or wagers on improbable outcomes, often involving money. It can occur among peers or within school-related activities, such as betting on sporting events, playing games of chance for money, or engaging in illegal gambling activities.

Research has demonstrated an increase in negative behaviours due to heightened social and academic pressures, with recent findings revealing that vices such as substance abuse, bullying, and truancy continue to be significant concerns among students (Abaa, 2022). According to a 2022 report from the National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, approximately 30% of high school students engage in substance misuse, and bullying remains prevalent, affecting 20% of students (Wang & Fredricks, 2019; National Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2022).

It is essential to address vices early on in students' lives to prevent them from becoming ingrained habits. Indecencies, for example, substance misuse, harassment, delinquency, and others, can fundamentally ruin brilliant performance in academics, leading to uninspiring and inadequate commitment to the school (Elias, & Leverett, 2019). These actions have an impact on students' emotional well-being beyond academics, which may result in emotional distress, low self-esteem, and other mental health issues. Forestalling misconducts are fundamental to improving sound interactive abilities and connections. Preventing misconduct is essential for fostering healthy social skills and relationships, and it teaches students valuable conflict-resolution techniques that will benefit them throughout their lives (Turnuklu, 2011). Focusing on vice prevention also helps students develop strong character and promotes positive values, contributing to moral development. Ultimately, vice prevention is critical to creating a safer and more supportive school environment (Thornton et al., 2024). By addressing social vices, educators and counsellors can guide students towards becoming responsible, confident, and effective individuals, thus supporting their overall growth-physically, emotionally, and socially-through the foundational stages of their education (Elias & Leverett, 2019).

### **The driving theories**

This study's primary focus is to examine the effect of Conflict Resolution and Social Learning Theory on preventing social vices. Specifically, this paper centres on several key theoretical frameworks, including Conflict Resolution Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Attachment Theory, and Resilience Theory.

Conflict Resolution Theory emphasises addressing and managing conflicts through peaceful and cooperative methods. According to Deutsch (1973) and Johnson & Johnson (2005), teaching students collaborative strategies enables them to resolve disputes constructively. These strategies include enhancing communication skills, fostering problem-solving, and promoting mediation techniques.

Social Learning Theory (SLT), proposed by Bandura (1977), suggests that individuals acquire behaviours by observing the actions of others. In educational environments, pupils often imitate the behaviours peers and teachers demonstrate. Therefore, role modelling, peer mentoring, and positive reinforcement are key in shaping students' behaviour.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), an extension of Social Learning Theory introduced by Bandura (1986), highlights the role of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and reciprocal determinism in behaviour development. Students are more likely to engage in positive behaviours if they believe in their ability to succeed and anticipate favourable outcomes from their actions.

Attachment Theory, developed by Bowlby (1969), argues that early emotional bonds significantly impact a child's development. Secure attachments to caregivers or teachers promote trust, emotional regulation, and social competence, essential for healthy growth (Roth-Hanania et al., 2023; Sroufe, 2021).

Resilience Theory, Ungar (2022) defines resilience theory as the capacity to adapt positively to adversity. Protective factors such as emotional support, effective coping mechanisms, and positive role models empower children to resist negative peer pressure and avoid engaging in harmful behaviours.

Preventing vices among basic school pupils is critical for educators, parents, and policymakers, especially in communities where children face social and emotional challenges. Behaviours such as aggression, dishonesty, peer pressure, and substance experimentation often emerge in early childhood and, if not addressed, can obstruct academic achievement and healthy development. Applying psychological theories, including Conflict Resolution Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Attachment Theory, and Resilience Theory, offers a robust framework for encouraging positive behaviour and mitigating vices within schools. These theories provide valuable insights into how children think, learn, build relationships, and cope with challenges, offering practical strategies for promoting moral development and emotional well-being in young learners.

**Methodology**

This study implored a qualitative case study design to examine the impact of conflict resolution and social learning strategies in selected basic schools within Kabba/Bunu LGA. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers, school administrators, and parents, focus group discussions with pupils, and the analysis of school behaviour records. Purposive sampling was utilised to select schools that were recognised for implementing behavioural interventions. Thematic analysis was performed to identify consistent patterns and insights aligned with the theoretical frameworks.

**Significance of Vice prevention among basic school pupils**

Preventing vices among basic school pupils in Kabba/Bunu LGA is imperative for fostering learners' well-being and development. Addressing behaviours such as bullying, substance abuse, and truancy is crucial, as these issues can impede academic performance and social growth. Establishing a solid foundation for vice prevention enhances the educational experience and contributes to the development of responsible and ethical citizens.

- ◆ **Close-to-home Prosperity:** Engaging in social vices such as aggression and dishonesty can lead to depression, diminished self-esteem, and other psychological challenges among pupils. These behaviours are crucial for promoting mental health and emotional stability. (González-Carrasco, et al. 2021; Sourander et al. 2022).
- ◆ **Supporting Holistic Development:** Preventing vices supports pupils' physical, emotional, and social growth. This comprehensive development is essential for nurturing well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society (Hamilton et al., 2022; Laursen & Collins, 2023).
- ◆ **Character Formation:** Instilling positive values and preventing vices shape students' moral and character development. This foundation aids in making ethical decisions and resisting negative influences (Lickona, 2021; Berkowitz & Bier, 2023).
- ◆ **Advancing Positive Propensities:** Promoting constructive behaviours leads to healthier lifestyles and enhances students' ability to engage effectively in academic and extracurricular activities (Harris et al., 2022; Anderson et al., 2023).
- ◆ **Brief Intercession:** Promptly intervening with vices prevents them from becoming ingrained habits. Early intervention is vital in mitigating behaviours such as substance abuse and aggression, ensuring they do not adversely affect students' development and academic performance (Brannstrom et al., 2021; Hawkins & Catalano, 2023).
- ◆ **Academic Performance:** Behaviours like truancy, substance abuse, and bullying relate to poor academic outcomes, including lower grades and decreased motivation. By curbing these vices, students are more likely to achieve academic excellence. Vices have been linked to poor academic outcomes, such as lower grades, decreased motivation, and higher dropout rates ((Henry & Huizinga, 2021; Stewart & Simons, 2023).

- ◆ Advancement of Interactive abilities: Reinventing vices aids students in developing healthy interpersonal skills and fostering empathy, collaboration, and effective communication, which are essential for building positive relationships (Wentzel & Ramani, 2022; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2023).
- ◆ Reduction of Dangerous Behaviours: Implementing vice prevention strategies decreases the likelihood of students engaging in criminal or harmful activities, contributing to a safer and more conducive learning environment (Reyes et al., 2022; Hawkins et al., 2023).

Incorporating these strategies enhances individual student outcomes and contributes to the creation of a supportive and effective educational environment within the Kabba/Bunu LGA.

### **Principles of Conflict resolution Theory**

Understanding and implementing these theoretical frameworks enable educators and policymakers to design interventions that effectively address conflicts and mitigate the development of vices among students. Conflict resolution involves dialogue and problem-solving, equipping students with the skills to handle interpersonal challenges constructively. When these abilities are nurtured, learners are less likely to resort to harmful behaviours, thereby reducing the incidence of vices such as bullying or substance abuse. From a behavioural perspective, teaching students to approach conflicts thoughtfully and empathetically can transform their responses, steering them away from negative behaviours. Moreover, conflict resolution fosters an understanding of fairness, justice, and empathy, which are fundamental to ethical conduct.

Peer mediation and conflict resolution training significantly cultivate a positive school culture. This culture, in turn, serves as a preventive measure against social vices, fostering a safer and more supportive learning environment. Empirical evidence supports this approach, indicating that schools with robust conflict resolution programs typically experience fewer incidents of misconduct and violence.

Equipping pupils with conflict resolution skills and a strong ethical foundation enables them to address challenges effectively, which is essential for preventing vices. One of the most effective programmes for conflict resolution is Peer Mediation, rooted in social learning theory. This approach teaches students to mediate disputes, fostering empathy and problem-solving abilities (Shahrour, Ananbh & Alzoubi, 2023). Peer mediation empowers for cultivation of essential life skills, and promotes a favourable school climate, making it a recommended model for preventing vices in educational settings (Low et al., 2015). By actively involving students in resolving conflicts, peer mediation aligns with various conflict resolution models, such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, which helps pupils adapt their dispute resolution styles (Womack, 2016). Additionally, peer mediation enhances accountability and collaboration, as demonstrated in intervention models where trained pupils engage in discussions to reach agreements. Collectively, these models emphasise the importance of social interactions in preventing negative behaviours by promoting cooperation, understanding, and

constructive practices within the school environment (Johnson & Johnson, 2016).

Peer mediation has emerged as an effective strategy for mitigating misconduct and fostering a positive school culture among primary school students. Research supports its efficacy in several key areas:

1. **Strengthening and Creativity:** Interactive discussion engages the participants by forthrightly including them in settling differences, cultivating a feeling of assurance and responsibility. Bullying and aggressive behaviour are discouraged by this feeling of empowerment. Understudies participating in peer intervention programmes foster a more grounded feeling of individual organisation, prompting a more suitable and cordial way of behaving (Shaw et al. (2021).
2. **Expertise Improvement:** Peer negotiation assists arbitrators with creating essential abilities, such as undivided attention, communication skills, understanding and critical thinking. Managing social interactions and reducing instances of unacceptable behaviours require these skills. Seliman (2018) viewed understudies associated with peer intervention settle clashes all the more effectively and apply these abilities in different aspects of their lives, decreasing the burden of being attracted to unpleasantness.
3. **Positive Job Demonstrating:** Intervention among peers aligns with the social learning assumptions, stressing the significance of displaying positive behaviour patterns. Students are more likely to emulate peers who are successful mediators of conflicts, thereby fostering a culture of mutual respect and cooperation. McLeod (2016) demonstrates that observing positive behaviour leads to imitation, thereby reducing the prevalence of vices, and this continues to support Bandura's theory.
4. **Cultivating a Positive School Atmosphere:** Intercession among peers adds to a positive school environment by decreasing the recurrence and power of contentions. A good school climate characteristically stems from the escalation of vices, as learners are bound to have a solid sense of safety and security, regard, and cherish (Edwards et al., 2017). Schools with dynamic negotiation programmes experience a noticeable improvement in the school environment, prompting fewer struggles and a decrease in the exhibition of unacceptable behaviour (Thapa et al., 2017).
5. **Building Stronger Relationships:** Peer mediation helps to build stronger interpersonal relations by promoting open communication and mutual understanding. Strong interconnections are a defensive component against misbehaviour, as students are less inclined to participate in unsafe behaviours when they feel associated and esteemed within their group. Peer mediation reduces learners' likelihood of inappropriate behaviours (Jones & Bodtker, 2020).
6. **Forestalling Escalation of Disagreements:** By tending to clashes early, peer intervention keeps them from growing into extra extreme issues. Students are less likely to resort to vices as a means of coping with unresolved conflicts or emotional distress as a

result of early intervention. Early conflict resolution through peer mediation can significantly reduce school violence and substance abuse (Smith & Wilson, 2019). In the structured Peer Mediation Programme, trained student mediators assist their peers in constructively resolving conflicts.

The phases of principles of how peer intervention commonly functions, as referenced by Johnson and Johnson (2016), Bodine and Crawford (2017) and Jones and Bodtke (2020), is here presented:

1. **Determination and Preparing of Arbiters:** Understudies are to become peer intermediaries and have guidelines, for example, on the capacity to stay fair-minded, empathic and authentic. The chosen students were taught mediation methods, like undivided attention and relational skills with intervention structures through role-playing.
2. **Process of Referral:** When teachers, staff, or students identify conflicts, mediation can be an option for students who disagree to settle their disputes. A counsellor or coordinator typically recommends the peer mediation programme and determines whether the case is suitable for mediation.
3. **Preparing for the Mediation:** Participation in mediation should be voluntary. Parties involved in the contention should consent to the appropriate setting for the intervention meeting, guaranteeing that security is not compromised and typically booking it to be held in a neutral place.
4. **Intervention Meeting:** The mediation meeting begins with participants getting to know one another; the organiser explains the intervention cycle and sets standard procedures, underlining classifications and guidelines. Members can assess an open door to express their point of view on the contention without interference. Mediators engage in active listening and may summarise or paraphrase to ensure comprehension. Also, arbiters assist the gatherings by distinguishing hidden issues and shared convictions. They guide the conversation to zero in on interests as opposed to positions.
5. **Creating Choices:** The intermediaries work in a meeting to generate new ideas where the two players recommend potential arrangements. All ideas are taken into account without judging. The gatherings discuss the attainability and worthiness of every choice, planning to find pleasant arrangements together.
6. **Agreeing:** The go-between assists the gatherings by forming a reasonable and explicit understanding of conscience conscientiousness, which settles, specifying each party's moves. Such understanding is often set up as a written record and endorsed by the two players to reinforce their responsibility.
7. **Follow-Up:** Guides or programme facilitators might check on Discordant to guarantee the agreement is being executed and to resolve any further issues, assuming they emerge. The intervention interaction assesses and accrues criticism where necessary for members to work on the programme and prepare for future intermediaries. The phases



of principles of how peer intervention commonly functions (Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Bodine & Crawford, 2017; Jones & Bodtke, 2020):

### **Principles of social learning theory**

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) underscores the significance of observational learning, where individuals acquire behaviours by watching others (Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2017). In educational settings, Social Learning Theory emphasises the role of teachers and peers as influential role models, as pupils learn not only from direct instruction but also by observing the behaviours of others (Bandura, 2020). In educational contexts, this theory highlights how students learn through direct instruction and observing the actions and outcomes experienced by teachers and peers. Positive behaviours, such as cooperation and empathy, are reinforced when students see these actions rewarded, while negative behaviours may proliferate if left unaddressed (Ormrod, 2014).

In Social Learning Theory (SLT), the critical components of observation, imitation, modelling, and reinforcement explain how individuals learn from their environment (Wentzel & Miele, 2016; Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 2017; Bandura, 2020; Bandura, & Walter, 2022). Here is a detailed explanation of the components:

**Observation:** In educational settings, students learn by observing the behaviours of teachers, peers, and role models. This initial exposure to new behaviours and skills is critical. Teachers can create environments that consistently demonstrate positive behaviours and academic practices. Tools like videos, demonstrations, and live simulations help students observe and apply complex concepts (Woolfolk, 2021).

**Imitation:** After observing behaviour, students replicate it. This step is vital for internalising and practising new skills. Peer learning is effective, as students often imitate the strategies of successful peers, especially in cooperative learning environments (Decker & Van Winkle, 2019).

**Modelling:** Teachers, parents, and peers are role models, demonstrating behaviours and explaining their reasoning. Modelling helps students understand what to do and why and why. When teachers model behaviours like critical thinking and perseverance, they set standards for students to follow (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 2017; Anderson & Dill, 2020).

**Reinforcement:** Positive or constructive feedback on imitated behaviours encourages repetition of desired behaviours. Educators can use praise and rewards to reinforce positive outcomes and guide students towards better choices (Poulou, 2021). Social Learning Theory (SLT), consisting of observation, imitation, modelling, and reinforcement, is applied to enhance student learning and behaviour development in educational settings. By applying these components, educators can effectively influence student learning, foster positive behaviours, and create a supportive environment where students can express themselves and succeed academically and socially (Woolfolk, 2021).

Perceptive processes such as attention, retention, and motivation are essential in SLT, as students must be engaged and able to recall observed behaviours to imitate them effectively. Educators can enhance learning by creating engaging and relevant lessons that resonate with students' lives (Schunk, 2020).

Social Learning Theory (SLT) informs classroom management by promoting a positive and respectful environment where supportive discipline encourages students to emulate positive behaviours (Bandura, 2020). Group work and peer learning are effective strategies under SLT, allowing students to observe and practice cooperative and problem-solving skills in a social context (Gillies, 2016). Curriculum design can benefit from SLT by incorporating real-life scenarios, multimedia tools, and role-playing, making learning more effective and relatable (Mayer, 2019). SLT highlights the importance of addressing negative role models by reinforcing positive behaviours and implementing intervention programmes to prevent harmful conduct (Mayer, 2019).

In summary, SLT provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how students learn from their environment. It emphasises the significance of positive role models, reinforcement, and engaging learning experiences in fostering academic success and social development which in help to prevent social vices in schools. Later, the social cognitive theory principles were concretised and driven by self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and reciprocal determinations. These help prevent social vices in schools and showed that;

- ◆ Pupils' self-efficacy beliefs can influence their behaviour, so conflict resolution strategies should promote self-efficacy.
- ◆ Pupils' outcome expectations can influence their behaviour, so conflict resolution strategies should promote positive outcome expectations.
- ◆ The environment influences the pupils' behaviour, so conflict resolution strategies should create a supportive environment.

## **Discussion**

The findings affirm that conflict resolution strategies and social learning mechanisms significantly reduce the incidence of vices among pupils. Mediation sessions, role-playing, and structured peer dialogue promoted empathy and peaceful problem-solving. Teacher modelling of respectful behaviour encouraged similar conduct among learners, supporting Bandura's (1977) observational learning theory.

Moreover, pupils with strong attachments to caregivers or mentors displayed better emotional regulation and fewer behavioural issues, which align with attachment theory. Interventions that reinforced positive behaviour through recognition and rewards enhanced students' self-efficacy, a core aspect of SCT. Community and parental involvement further solidified these gains, emphasising the interconnectedness of school and home environments.

However, challenges such as limited teacher training, resource constraints, and cultural

resistance to non-punitive discipline practices were noted. Addressing these is critical for sustaining the vice prevention programme in basic schools.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that integrating conflict resolution and social learning strategies in basic education offers a robust vice-prevention framework. A supportive school climate, guided by empathetic teachers and peer mentors, can significantly influence pupils' behaviour. The findings support a multidisciplinary approach to education that nurtures emotional, cognitive, and social competencies essential for holistic development.

### **Recommendations**

Conflict resolution programmes and Social Learning theory can be used effectively in counselling to prevent social vices among basic school students. These methods can incorporate compromise abilities into the school educational plan to engage students with compelling correspondence and critical thinking abilities and help educators and school overseers through training and workshops on the friendly learning hypothesis and its application in forestalling bad habits. It can help to lay out peer coaching projects to advance positive job displaying and socialisation among basic school students; empower parental associations and local area commitment to support positive qualities and ways of behaving; create and execute proof-based projects to address explicit vices, for example, harassment, substance misuse and other vices. Both methods can lead to standard appraisals and assessments to screen the viability of compromise and social learning hypothesis-based mediations and create a welcoming and secure school environment that fosters respect, empathy, and social-emotional learning among learners. Schools can collaborate with stakeholders and organisations to provide resources and support to pupils and families affected by social vice. Thereby promoting the following outcomes:

- ◆ Integrate conflict resolution modules into the basic education curriculum nationwide.
- ◆ Provide continuous training for teachers on behaviour management and mediation.
- ◆ Establish school-based peer mentoring and reward systems.
- ◆ Engage parents and community leaders through workshops and sensitisation.
- ◆ Formulate educational policies that prioritise restorative discipline.
- ◆ Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of behavioural programmes.
- ◆ Replicate the model in other LGAs and adapt it to diverse cultural settings. Given the standards of conflict resolution and social learning, these ideas might help devise pragmatic measures to forestall bad habits among basic school students in Nigeria.

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