

ADOPTION OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION TECHNIQUES BY COUNSELLORS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GOMBE STATE

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Abstract

This study sought to determine whether counsellors at secondary schools in Gombe State adopted intervention techniques to settle conflicts. Two research questions guided the investigation. The researcher established and analyzed two null hypotheses at the significance level of .05. The study adopted a census survey as its research design. There were 113 counsellors in the study's population (45 men and 68 women). Since the population could be controlled, no sampling was done. Data was gathered using a standardized questionnaire. Three experts from Gombe State University validated the instrument: two from the guidance and counselling department and one from the measurement and evaluation department of the department of mathematics and computer education (Measurement and Evaluation Unit). 92.9 percent of the instruments that were distributed were returned. The t-test was used to evaluate the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance, and the mean with standard deviation was used to answer the study questions. The data demonstrated that when it came to resolving disputes between secondary school students in Gombe State, counsellors did not use administrative or moral intervention strategies. Among other things, it was suggested that workshops and seminars be held to familiarize counsellors with administrative and ethical intervention methods. Both students' academic achievement and counsellors' productivity will increase as a result.

Keywords: Counsellor, Intervention, Techniques, Conflicts, Resolution.

Introduction

In the course of everyday contacts, every organization encounters conflict from time to time. Conflict is normal and unavoidable when individuals collaborate and share different ideas, worries, viewpoints, and objectives, claims Ezebuiri (2018). Conflict is a disagreement and misunderstanding between two parties concerning issues. According to Chukwunta (2014), conflict is a significant disagreement that causes hostility and opposition in interpersonal, group, and organizational relationships. When there are opposing or divergent viewpoints on a given topic, conflict arises (Bacal, 2014). This implies that a group or party, not just one person, must be involved in a fight. Conflict in the context of this study refers to a circumstance in which two or

more students seem to have incompatible interests, conflicts, or goals. Conflicting students are

described as arguing, splitting up, having difficulties, and fighting over anything. Miscommunication amongst students regarding their needs, ideas, views, goals, or values frequently leads to conflict.

Applying effective intervention strategies requires a thorough grasp of what conflict is and why it arises among students (Bacal, 2014). Conflicts appear to be common in Gombe State's secondary schools. At Government Girl's Secondary School Doma, for example, there have been documented instances of a breakdown in instruction and learning due to student misunderstandings brought on by some students' uncontrollable sexual desire (Uwakwe, 2020). It is impossible for students to think developmentally in a conflict-filled setting. Thus, it suggests that they will be deprived of the ability to create fresh concepts, projects, and inventions, which could lead to students consistently performing poorly on internal and external tests (Nnamdi, 2016). Therefore, guidance counsellors' help will significantly lower its prevalence. An educator who works in secondary schools to help all students develop their academic, career, and university education preparedness as well as their personal and social capabilities is known as a school guidance counsellor (Shehu, 2014). Shehu added that school guidance counsellors are dedicated to offering high-quality educational assistance to improve each student's educational chances in elementary, secondary, and special education settings.

Some guidance counsellors in secondary schools today are also counsellors tasked with advising students on how to make well-informed decisions on their future in regard to training, education, and job, claims Ezebuio (2014). Additionally, Shehu stated that these guidance counsellors are tasked with advising students and teachers on how to prevent confrontation. Ezebuio listed a few intervention strategies that school counsellors could use to resolve conflicts in an efficient manner. These strategies include of both moral and administrative intervention strategies. The researcher is concerned that chaos and indiscipline among instructors and students will be common in secondary schools in Gombe State if intervention approaches for conflict resolution in schools are not implemented. This will negatively impact instruction and learning, and consequently, how well students perform on internal and external tests. This concern served as the impetus for the researchers to look into how counsellors in Gombe State's secondary schools perceived the intervention strategies used for conflict resolution.

School counsellors can manage students' tendencies to avoid or withdraw from demanding academic tasks by equipping them with more constructive and socially acceptable coping strategies. This approach represents an administrative intervention method for resolving conflicts in secondary schools (Greenhalgh, 2019). For instance, when students ask for assistance, it must be provided. Counsellors use clearly defined classroom rules as an administrative intervention strategy for secondary school conflict resolution. Students are informed of the rules' purpose and find them to be relevant, authentic, and meaningful (Iravo, 2021).

Counsellors use clear communication of expectations, rules, procedures, and consequences to

students as an intervention strategy to address conflict in the classroom, according to Oguzie

(2014). The best rules that counsellors provide for students are those that are encouraging and describe what the students should do rather than what they should not do. As a result, this regulation serves as a reminder to the students of exactly what is expected of them. This draws attention to the rationale behind the rules and encourages group debate among the students on the guidelines they will abide by.

As a means of moral intervention approaches for conflict resolution, school counsellors instruct children in perspective taking, self-control, and social behaviour like sharing (Greenhalgh, 2019). Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that a counsellor with strong moral character and effectiveness needs to be able to regulate students' conduct. Counsellors teach students empathy and self-discipline, two qualities that are essential components of character. One of the four core elements in the cognitive–developmental framework of moral maturity is students' capacity to translate their moral understanding into concrete action. This component aligns closely with the development of moral will in managing conflicts within secondary schools, a value that counsellors intentionally cultivate in learners (White, 2019). School counsellors, who may be male or female, play a vital role in guiding students toward this practical expression of moral vision.

One important aspect influencing teachers' expertise and knowledge is gender. The views of male and female counsellors working in Gombe State's public secondary schools are included in this study. Conflict in schools, however, can lead to anarchy, a collapse of law and order, and a drop in educational standards if it is ignored. It is impossible to overstate the importance of counsellors participating in conflict resolution in secondary schools. Thus, it became necessary to conduct an empirical study on the use of conflict resolution intervention approaches by counsellors in Gombe State secondary schools. This was the gap that this study attempted to fill.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher has observed student disagreement over the years as a teacher, and when left unresolved, these conflicts have an impact on the school's growth. Unresolved conflict leads to ongoing disagreements, arguments, and hostility between the school's administration, counsellors, and students. The researcher also noticed that a lack of intervention strategies for conflict resolution made student conflict worse. The students' persistently low academic performance on both internal and external exams appears to have been influenced by this unpleasant circumstance. The administrative and moral intervention strategies are the main topics of this study. Nonetheless, it appears that school administration has a significant influence on how disputes are resolved in classrooms. Counsellors' contribution to dispute resolution may not always be fully acknowledged. Because of their interactions with students and their roles in schools, counsellors ought to be actively involved in conflict resolution. As a result, the study was required.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this research was to examine the extent to which counsellors utilize

intervention strategies for managing conflicts in secondary schools in Gombe State. Specifically,

the study intended to:

1. Assess the level at which counsellors apply administrative intervention strategies in resolving conflicts within secondary schools in Gombe State.
2. Evaluate the extent to which counsellors implement moral-based intervention approaches for conflict resolution in secondary schools in Gombe State.

Research Questions

The study was directed by the following research questions:

1. Which administrative intervention strategies are employed by counsellors in managing conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State?
2. Which moral-based intervention approaches are utilized by counsellors in addressing conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the average responses of male and female counsellors regarding the administrative intervention strategies they employ in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State.
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female counsellors concerning the moral intervention approaches they utilize in managing conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State.

Methodology

For this study, a census survey research design was used. Idoko (2011) states that a census survey is a type of research design in which information is gathered from all members of the target community. This statistical enumeration design examines every member of the population. Because it enables the researcher to gather original data and characterize their condition as they exist in their natural environment, the census survey research strategy is thus thought to be the most suitable for this study. It offers a higher level of data accuracy and comprehensive data for the entire population being studied. This claim led to the conclusion that this design was the best suitable for the research. The study's focus was Gombe State. One of the five states in North-East Nigeria is Gombe State, which has seventeen (11) local government units. Gombe, Kaltungo, Balanga, Yelmatu Deba, Nafada, and Billiri are the six local government area in the state. The 113 counsellors (45 men and 68 women) who were employed by Gombe State's 115 senior public secondary schools at the time of the study's completion made up the study's population. The full population of 113 respondents participated in the study because the counsellor population was comparatively manageable. Consequently, no sampling was done.

The researcher's "Counsellors' Adoption of Intervention Techniques for Conflict Resolution"

(CAITCR) questionnaire was used to gather data. A and B are the two sections of the

questionnaire. While section B contains two clusters, section A contains two items that solicited biographical information from the respondents. While Cluster 2 contains six items on moral intervention approaches, Cluster 1 contains thirteen items on administrative intervention techniques. Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) are the four response options on the questionnaire. The values for these options are 4, 3, 2, and 1.

Three specialists from Gombe State University verified the instrument: two from the Guidance and Counselling Department and one from the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education's Measurement and Evaluation section. The researcher employed the Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate to examine data gathered at coefficients of .80 for cluster 1 and .78 for cluster 2 in order to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The researcher then used the instrument to gather data for the study after determining the overall instrument's coefficient, which came out to be .71. The researcher deemed this to be high enough.

With the support of six trained research assistants who participated in a one-day briefing on the procedures for administering and collecting the instrument the researcher distributed 113 questionnaire copies to the participants. Given the respondents' professional commitments, they were granted sufficient time to complete the instrument. A convenient date for retrieval was then jointly scheduled by the researcher and the respondents.

Out of the 113 questionnaires administered, 105 were successfully returned, representing a response rate of 92.9%. The collected data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and t-test statistical tools. The questionnaire items were structured on a four-point Likert scale comprising Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), assigned weights of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. A benchmark mean of 2.50 was established by dividing the total assigned weights by four.

A mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as "Agree," whereas a mean below 2.50 was regarded as "Disagree." Similarly, each null hypothesis was rejected when the calculated t-value was greater than or equal to the critical value, and retained when the computed t-value was less than the critical value. These decision criteria served as the basis for interpreting the data collected, enabling the researcher to address the research questions and test the hypotheses that guided the study.

Results

Research Question 1

Which administrative intervention strategies are utilized by counsellors in managing conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings on the administrative intervention

strategies employed in resolving conflicts among secondary school students.

S/n	Administrative intervention techniques	SA	A	D	SD		SD
	Adopted in resolving conflicts include;	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	X	
1.	Engaging stakeholders in the development of school rules and regulations aimed at addressing and resolving conflicts within the school.	8	12	23	62	1.68	0.96
2.	Involving security agencies in resolving conflicts in school	16	35	29	25	2.40	1.02
3.	Counsellor's advice that dissident students be expelled.	19	36	30	20	2.51	1.00
4.	Counsellors invite PTA to settle disputes	11	13	32	49	1.87	1.00
5.	Advise the school management to set up a committee to settle conflicts	15	41	25	24	2.45	1.00
6.	Encourage the school management to close down the school to avoid students' riot.	10	45	26	24	2.39	0.95
7.	Use normal statutory procedures for resolving conflicts.	21	35	31	18	2.56	1.00
8.	Ensure adequate teaching and learning within a conducive environment to preoccupy the time of the students.	22	34	31	18	2.57	1.01
9.	Inviting school disciplinary committee headed by principal of the school, to settle such conflict.	12	46	24	23	2.45	0.96
10.	Recommending clear demarcation of line of duty to helping resolving conflicts.	14	48	17	26	2.48	1.01
11.	Use adequate communication strategies to disseminate information towards resolving conflict.	18	39	28	20	2.52	0.99
12.	Counsellors invite influential PTA members to have a dialogue with the partners concerned for a lasting and financial settlement of conflicts.	15	37	27	26	2.39	1.01
13.	Counsellors invite clergy to help settle conflicts in schools.	9	15	28	53	1.81	0.98
	Grand Mean					2.31	0.99

The grand mean was 2.31 and the standard deviation was 0.99, according to the results shown in Table 1. This suggested that when it comes to settling disputes between secondary school pupils in Gombe State, counsellors do not employ administrative intervention strategies. The items' standard deviation also showed that respondents' opinions on the matter were mostly in agreement.

Research Question 2

Which moral-based intervention strategies are employed by counsellors in addressing conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings on the moral intervention strategies utilized by counsellors in conflict resolution.

S/n	Moral intervention techniques adopted in resolving conflict include;	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	X	SD
14.	Counsellors use prayers to God to resolve conflict	5	11	18	71	1.52	0.87
15.	Counsellors advice conflicting parties or Individuals to tolerate one another or each other in the interest of peace.	36	42	17	10	2.99	0.94
16.	Counsellors instruct parties or individuals involved in conflict to have a forgiving spirit	24	44	23	14	2.74	0.96
17.	Utilization of neglect to disarm the combatants emotionally.	18	34	33	20	2.48	0.99
18.	Utilization of the principle of doing to others what you would like to bed one to you.	12	17	31	45	1.96	1.03
19.	Utilizing the win-win conflict resolution strategy.	10	19	26	50	1.90	1.02
Grand Mean						2.27	0.97

According to the results in Table 2, counsellors in Gombe State do not use moral intervention tactics to settle disputes between secondary school students. The grand mean of 2.27, which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, makes this clear. The respondents' consistent viewpoints were demonstrated by the aggregate standard deviation score of 0.97.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no statistically significant difference between the average responses of male and female counsellors regarding the administrative intervention strategies they employ in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State.

Table 3: The t-test analysis comparing respondents' views on the use of administrative

intervention strategies for conflict resolution.

Groups	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male counsellors	41	2.27	0.61	103	1.15	1.96	Ho not rejected
Female counsellors	64	2.12	0.72				

Based on the t-test results presented in Table 3, the calculated t-value of 1.15 is lower than the critical t-value of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance with 103 degrees of freedom. Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of male and female counsellors regarding the use of administrative intervention strategies to resolve conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State.

Hypotheses 2

There is no statistically significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female counsellors concerning the moral intervention strategies they utilize in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State.

Table 4: *The t-test analysis of respondents' mean scores on the implementation of moral intervention strategies.*

Groups	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male counsellors	41	2.25	0.68	103	0.79	1.96	Ho not rejected
Female counsellors	64	2.14	0.70				

The t-test results presented in Table 4 indicate that at the 0.05 level of significance with 103 degrees of freedom, the calculated t-value of 0.79 is lower than the critical value of 1.96. This implies that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of male and female counsellors regarding the use of moral intervention strategies in resolving conflicts among secondary school students in Gombe State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained.

Discussion of the Findings

The study's conclusions are examined below in light of the research questions and hypotheses that served as its compass.

According to the findings of the first research question, most respondents said that counsellors in Gombe State do not use administrative intervention strategies to settle disputes amongst secondary school students. The results are consistent with those of Ezebuiro (2018), who found that guidance counsellors' use of administrative intervention tactics to settle disputes in secondary schools in the Umuahia South local government area has fallen short of expectations.

Ezebuio went on to blame principals' failure to include guidance counsellors in the administrative process for the poor implementation of administrative intervention strategies by guidance counsellors. This is consistent with Enyiazu (2015), who observed that secondary school guidance counsellors appeared to have failed in their responsibilities due to the administrators' alleged incapacity to include guidance counsellors in secondary school administration. Therefore, secondary school principals should see participation of counsellors in the administrative process as one of the most important administrative technique of conflict resolution in schools. This is because involving counsellors in the administrative process will improve their proficiency, originality, and dedication in using administrative intervention strategies to settle disputes between secondary school pupils. The study also showed that the views of male and female counsellors regarding the use of administrative methods to settle disputes between Gombe State secondary school students were consistent. This is consistent with the findings of Ezebuio (2018), who found that the degree to which guidance counsellors use administrative intervention techniques to settle disputes amongst students is independent of gender.

Counsellors in secondary schools in Gombe State do not use moral intervention techniques to resolve conflicts, according to the results of the analysis of study question two. This finding is consistent with Oguzie (2014), who claimed that teachers' and guidance counsellors' inadequate use of moral intervention tactics was the cause of ongoing violence, fighting, miscommunication, protests, and riots among Nigerian secondary school students. This necessitates a critical evaluation of the moral intervention strategies used by counsellors to help students in order to lessen conflict and enhance their academic success in our educational system. Additionally, as these actions will act as a means of self-realization, counsellors should learn to use moral intervention tactics while working with students to enhance their academic achievement and moral decay. The findings of the second hypothesis's analysis showed that there was no discernible difference in the views of male and female counsellors on the use of moral intervention strategies to settle disputes between Gombe State's secondary school students. This is corroborated by Oguzie (2014), who found that guidance counsellors, both male and female, shared similar opinions about how much morality was used in secondary school conflict resolution.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were reached in light of the data. It can be inferred that when it came to settling disputes between secondary school pupils in Gombe State, counsellors did not use administrative or moral intervention strategies. Additionally, it was determined that there was no significant difference between the views of male and female counsellors about the use of administrative and moral intervention approaches to resolve conflict among Gombe State secondary school students.

However, disorder and indiscipline among instructors and students will be common in secondary schools in Gombe State if intervention strategies including administrative and moral

intervention approaches are not used for dispute resolution in schools. This will have a negative impact on instruction and learning, and consequently, on how well students perform on internal and external tests. Counsellors should thus use these intervention strategies since they will undoubtedly put the school in a position to successfully fulfil its primary goals of societal change and knowledge distribution.

Recommendations

The researcher makes the following recommendations in light of the study's findings and conclusions.

1. To familiarize counsellors with administrative and moral intervention strategies, the government and ministry of education should host seminars and workshops. Students' academic achievement and counselling productivity will both improve as a result.
2. The government and school officials should make sure that all of the state's schools employ only certified counsellors. This will lessen students' moral deterioration and raise the standard of secondary education.
3. In order to prevent conflict from arising from such deficiencies, the government should provide schools with adequate staffing, equipment, resources, and other facilities.
4. Every school should include a functioning guidance and counselling unit with professional counsellors serving as the heads in order to provide a calm learning environment and improve secondary school students' academic performance.

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