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SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Conflicts that range from peer disputes to internal emotional struggles are common experiences during adolescents' development, which are often worsened by social, psychological and academic pressures. School counsellors play a vital role in guiding adolescent through these challenges using various intervention strategies. This research examined the relationship between counselling interventions and the conflict resolution styles adopted by counsellors working with adolescents in secondary schools. Specifically, it investigated how techniques such as mediation, cognitive-behavioral therapy, empathy, and emotional regulation influence the choice of conflict resolution strategies. Guided by two research questions and one hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance, the study adopted a correlational survey design. Data were collected from 234 school counselling cases across 24 selected secondary schools Lagos State using stratified and simple random sampling. Data were examined using visual descriptors, mean score and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings revealed that collaborative and compromising conflict resolution styles were the most commonly used. Mediation and empathy-based interventions were also frequently employed counselling interventions. A statistically significant but weak positive correlation ($r = 0.191$, $p < 0.05$) was found between the counselling interventions and conflict resolution styles adopted. These results suggest that effective counselling practices contribute to more constructive conflict resolution among adolescents. The study underscoring the need for comprehensive training and consistent implementation of evidence-based interventions in school counselling programmes to support adolescent development and foster a harmonious school environment.

Keywords: Counselling Interventions, Conflict Resolution Styles, Adolescents, Secondary Schools, School Counsellors

Introduction

Conflict can be described as a natural and an inevitable and enduring aspect of human interaction and existence. It arises wherever people live, work, and interact with one another. Also,

when goals, interests or values become incompatible (Thakore, 2013). He further stated that conflict can be described as a misunderstanding or clash that occurs when one group seeks to have its perspectives or interests accepted over another's. These clashes may stem from differences in beliefs, goals, values, or communication styles and can manifest in various forms, such as verbal disagreements, emotional tension, or physical confrontations. At its core, conflict reflects the fundamental reality of human diversity and the challenge of navigating competing needs within relationships and social structures.

Conflict resolution refers to the structured processes employed to address disputes, restore harmony, and promote understanding. Thomas and Kilmann (1974) developed one of the most widely recognized models for understanding conflict management. Their model outlines five conflict resolution styles: Avoiding, Accommodating, Competing, Compromising, and Collaborating. These styles use by counsellors may vary in terms of assertiveness and cooperativeness and could be applied differently based on context of counselling need at the moment, personality of the adolescent, and learned behaviour. Among adolescents, these styles often emerge as instinctive responses which are shaped by upbringing, peer influence, and emotional maturity (Rahim, 2002).

Adolescents, in particular, face a unique set of developmental, emotional, and social challenges that make them especially vulnerable to conflict. Erikson's psychosocial theory (1968) identifies the period as the stage of "identity vs. role confusion stage of life, marked by puberty, identity formation, increased peer interaction, and the quest for autonomy, is often characterized by heightened emotional reactivity, risk-taking behavior, and interpersonal struggles. As Reddy and Devi (2018) noted, conflict resolution during adolescence is a critical skill linked to emotional regulation, peer relationships, and long-term psychosocial outcomes. When adolescents fail to learn effective conflict resolution techniques during adolescence that could be linked to poor mental health outcomes, strained relationships, and antisocial behavior in adulthood (Papalia et al., 2006). It is widely observed that school counselling services often involve group sessions, peer mediation programs, or individual therapy, all of which have shown promise in enhancing interpersonal relationships and reducing aggressive behavior (Okoye, 2014). Counsellors, by modeling and teaching constructive conflict resolution, become agents of positive social development.

While conflict is inevitable, the way individuals choose to manage it plays a significant role in determining whether it leads to growth or harm. Resolution of conflict could be seen as the methods and strategies used to address disagreements and restore harmony in relationships. It involves communication skills such as active listening, negotiation, empathy, reframing, compromise, and problem-solving. Adolescents typically adopt a range of conflict resolution

styles, including avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating (Deutsch, et.al. 2011). Each style reflects different levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness and carries unique implications for relationship dynamics and emotional outcomes. For example,

collaboration and compromise are generally seen as constructive, while avoidance and aggression may escalate tensions or leave issues unresolved.

Several empirical studies support the efficacy of counselling in shaping adolescents' conflict resolution styles. Pam (2023) found that the use of non-violent communication in counselling interventions contributed to improved relationships and fewer instances of physical or verbal aggression among secondary school students. Similarly, Adanna and Olumide (2023) observed that adolescents who participated in peer mediation and emotional regulation workshops displayed a greater tendency to use compromise and collaboration rather than confrontation.

In a study conducted in Nigerian tertiary institutions, Etele and Akunna (2023) reported that conflict was often managed through avoidance, indicating the need for more active and skill-based counselling interventions. Their findings suggest that while counselling services may exist, their content and delivery may not sufficiently address the real-world interpersonal conflicts experienced by adolescents and young adults.

Counselling interventions serve as a critical support mechanism for adolescents, particularly in school and community settings where structured support systems exist. Counsellors are professionally trained to help young people navigate emotional challenges, resolve interpersonal problems, and develop effective communication and coping strategies. Through techniques such as active listening, emotional validation, non-violent communication, and empathy-based engagement, counsellors create safe spaces for adolescents to explore their emotions and conflicts. As George (2016) and Tustonja et al. (2024) emphasize, professional counselling not only facilitates conflict resolution but also strengthens emotional intelligence, improves interpersonal communication, and fosters resilience.

Despite the established role of counselling in supporting adolescents, we still have a significant space in empirical research with regard to the effectiveness of specific counselling interventions in shaping adolescents' preferred conflict resolution styles. In many school systems, counselling services are available, yet adolescents continue to exhibit maladaptive conflict behaviours such as avoidance, confrontation, or passive aggression. This raises important questions: Are current counselling approaches adequately tailored to adolescent developmental needs? Do these interventions effectively foster constructive conflict resolution behaviors such as collaboration and compromise? Or are adolescents still relying on dysfunctional styles due to gaps in the implementation or quality of counselling services?

This research problem became particularly urgent in today's society, where adolescents face complex interpersonal pressures—from peer competition and academic stress to social media influences and family instability. Many adolescents navigate these conflicts without sufficient

guidance, and when their coping mechanisms fail, the outcomes may include broken relationships, disciplinary issues, mental health challenges, or even violence. Although the theoretical and practical potential of counselling is well-recognized, its real-world impact on conflict resolution

among adolescents remains underexplored and under-documented, particularly in the Nigerian context where cultural, institutional, and resource-related factors may affect counselling outcomes.

Furthermore, current literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of how specific counselling methods - such as cognitive-behavioral strategies, mediation, anger and emotional regulation training, empathy, validation and restorative dialogue influence adolescents' tendencies toward particular conflict resolution styles. Without this understanding, it is difficult for counsellors, educators, and policymakers to tailor interventions that are both effective and contextually appropriate. Existing studies often generalize counselling as a single construct, without distinguishing the type, depth, or delivery method of interventions, nor do they examine adolescents' post-intervention behavioral patterns in conflict situations.

Given these concerns, there is a compelling need to investigate the relationship between counselling interventions and the conflict resolution styles adopted by adolescents. This research sought to add to this critical space by investigating whether, and to what extent, exposure to structured counselling leads to healthier conflict resolution strategies. Specifically, it aimed to determine if counsellors who administer counselling are more likely to adopt constructive styles such as collaboration, compromise, accommodating and competing strategies, rather than maladaptive styles such as avoidance, aggression, or dominance. In doing so, the study also sought to inform best practices in counselling delivery, enhance programme design in schools and youth centers, and contribute to the development of policies that promote emotional well-being and peaceful coexistence among adolescents.

By focusing on this relationship, the study addresses an important intersection of educational psychology, developmental guidance, and conflict management. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations that will support counsellors in refining their approaches, enable schools to integrate more effective psychosocial support mechanisms, and guide policymakers in developing youth-focused strategies for social harmony. Ultimately, the research aspires to promote healthier adolescent development by ensuring that counselling interventions not only reach young people but also empower them with the tools to manage conflict in constructive, emotionally intelligent ways.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the common conflict resolution styles used by adolescents?
2. What counselling interventions are commonly applied to adolescents experiencing conflict?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- ◆ There is no significant relationship between counselling interventions strategies and conflict resolution styles adopted by counsellors in secondary schools in Lagos State.

Methodology

Design

1. The **correlational survey design** was employed by the study to examine the relationship between counsellors interventions and conflict resolution styles for adolescents.

Population and Sample

The targeted population comprised of counsellors in secondary schools who manage adolescents in public schools within Lagos State. A sample of 24 counsellors with 234 counselling occurrences were obtained using simple random sampling and purposive sampling. The six Educational District were adopted as strata while simple random sampling was used to select four schools in each of the district. This gave a total of 24 schools selected and a counsellor was selected in each of the schools to make 24 counsellors.

Table 1: *Counsellors selected across the six educational districts in Lagos State*

Educational District	No. of Counsellor	Cases
I	4	39
II	4	38
III	4	42
IV	4	40
V	4	35
VI	4	40
Total	24	234

The distribution in Table 1 shows the number of counsellors selected across Lagos state and the number of 234 recorded counselling cases within the 2024/2025 academic session.

An instrument titled the Counselling Interventions and Conflict Resolution Scale (CICRS) was developed and designed to gather data for this research. The scale consists of three sections. The first section gathered the biodata of the students whose counselling cases were reviewed. Of the sampled participants, 44% were between the age range of 12-15 years, while 56% fell within the age range of 16-19 years. In terms of gender, 76% of the selected cases involved female

participants, while 24% involved male students. Additionally, 53% of the selected cases were drawn from junior secondary schools whereas 47% were selected from the senior secondary

schools. The second section gathered information on conflict resolution styles employed by school counsellors. It comprised five subsections, each representing a conflict resolution style: *Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborative, Competing, and Compromising*. The third section focused on the counselling intervention strategies adopted by counsellors. This section included five domains, also with five statement each: *Anger & Emotional Regulation Training, Empathy & Validation, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Mediation and Restorative Dialogue strategies*. A five-point rating scale was used for both sections two and three, with response options ranging from 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often* and 5 = *Always*.

In order to ascertain the reliability of the CICRS, the instrument was tested in a school that was not part of the main study. To ascertain its stability, a test-retest method was used. The CICRS was administered twice to the respondents with an interval of two weeks between the first and second administration. A reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained, indicating a high level of stability and confirming the instrument suitability for use in the main study. During the main study, data were collected through the counsellors in the selected secondary schools, using their documented counselling cases. The collated data were analyzed using visual representations, such as bar chart, mean score and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance to determine the statistical relationship between counselling intervention and conflict resolution styles.

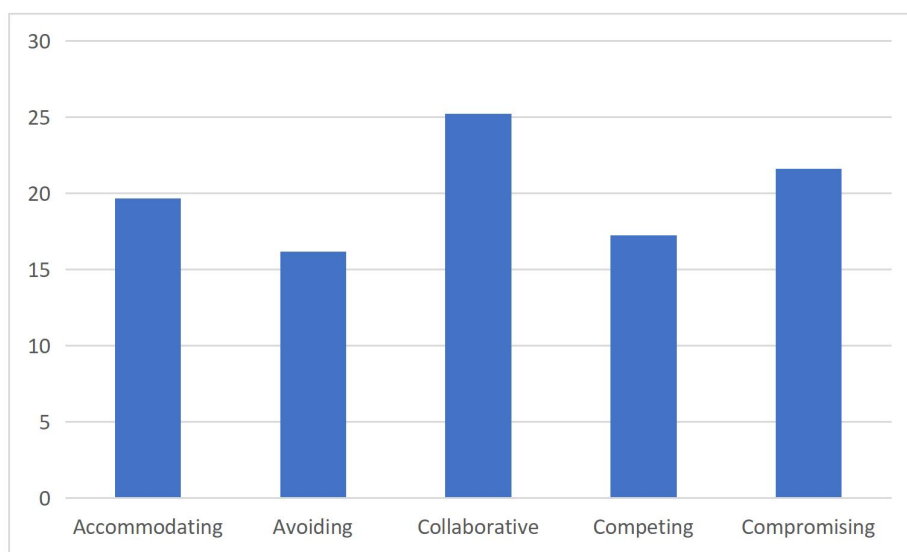
Results

Research question 1: What are the common conflict resolution styles used by counsellors?

Table 1: *Description on Conflict Resolutions Styles adopted by Counsellors*

Conflict Resolution	Frequency of Usage	Percentage
Accommodating	3679	20
Avoiding	3025	16
Collaborative	4712	25
Competing	3227	17
Compromising	4036	22
Total	18679	100

Figure 1: Conflict Resolution Styles used by Counsellors



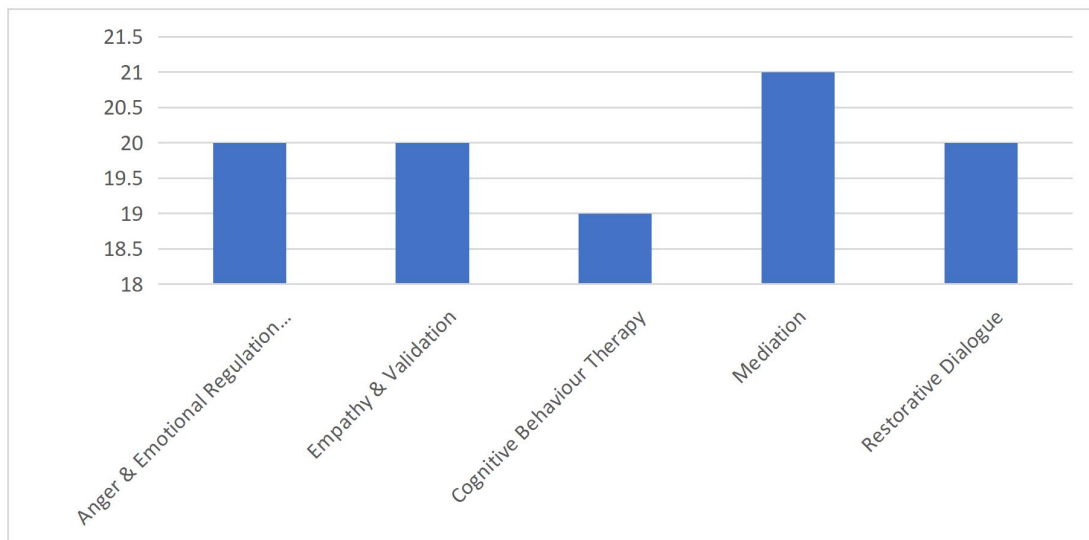
The results presented in Figure 1 indicate that 25% of the counsellors adopt collaborative conflict resolution styles, 22% use compromising styles, 20% prefer accommodating styles, and 17% employ competing styles. The remaining 16% adopt avoiding conflict resolution styles. Accordingly, the collaborative style is the most commonly used, with the highest adoption rate of 25%.

Research question 2: What counselling interventions are commonly applied to adolescents experiencing conflict?

Table 2: *Description on Counselling Interventions Strategies adopted by Counsellors*

Counselling Interventions	Frequency of Usage	Percentage
Anger & Emotional Regulation Training	4848	20
Empathy & Validation	5029	20
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy	4775	19
Mediation	5057	21
Restorative Dialogue	4836	20
Total	24545	100

Figure 1: Counselling Intervention Strategies used by Counsellors



Observations from Figure 2 reveal that mediation counselling intervention strategies are the most frequently utilized, accounting for 21%. Additionally, Anger and Emotional Regulation Training, Empathy and Validation Training, and Restorative Dialogue each have a usage rate of 20%. Furthermore, 19% of counsellors employ Cognitive Behavioural Therapy during their interactions with students. These findings indicate that mediation counselling strategies are the predominant approach among counsellors in their engagement with students in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 1: Between counselling interventions strategies and conflict resolution styles adopted by counsellors in secondary schools in Lagos State, no significant relationship exist.

Table 3: *Correlation of counselling interventions strategies and conflict resolution styles*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	df	r-cal	Sig.
Counselling Interventions Strategies	234	104.89	14.02	232	0.191	0.003
Conflict Resolution Styles	234	79.82	12.44			

Table 3 reveals a mean score of 104.89 for counselling interventions strategies and 79.82 for conflict resolution styles. The correlation coefficient of 0.191 ($p < 0.05$) indicates a positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that higher conflict resolution styles associated with improved counselling interventions strategies, and vice versa. Furthermore, since the correlation coefficient (0.191) exceeds the critical value of 0.195 ($\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 232$), the

relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the study

concludes that significant relationship between counselling interventions strategies and conflict resolution styles adopted by counsellors in secondary schools in Lagos State.

Discussion of Findings

The research observe that the collaborative conflict resolution style (25%) is the most frequently adopted style by school counsellors in Lagos State. This is followed by the compromising (22%) and accommodating (20%). This may have suggested that the adoption of conflict resolution strategies promotes mutual understanding, cooperation, and shared problem-solving. This outcome aligns with the report of Fajinmi and Oloyede (2025), who noted that collaborative styles is ideal for team building, promoting collaboration, and managing diverse perspectives. Similarly, Adham (2023) identified effective conflict resolution rely on understanding cultural and emotional differences, fostering a cooperative team environment, providing constructive feedback, practicing effective communication and relationship-building

The study observed that mediation counselling intervention strategy is the most frequently used which is closely followed by Anger and Emotional Regulation Training, Empathy and Validation Training and Restorative Dialogue. The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy is the least preferred counselling therapy. This shows that counsellors prefer opting for collaborative conflict resolution, emotional self-regulation, and the development of empathy among students, which are critical for managing adolescent behavioural challenges in educational settings. The outcome corroborates the Ugwoke et al. (2020) report on the effective use of mediation in school counselling. The researchers emphasized the potency of the counselling intervention in peaceful resolution of interpersonal conflicts among adolescents and promotes a climate of mutual respect. Likewise, empathy-building interventions were encouraged as an intervention in stemming bullying and improving peer relationships in Nigerian secondary schools (Aluede, 2018). Adeoye and Olutayo (2019) in their own study reported that emotional regulation training significantly improved students' ability to manage anger and impulsive reactions, especially in high-conflict school environments.

In addition, the study noted a significant positive relationship between counselling intervention strategies and the conflict resolution styles adopted by counsellors in secondary schools in Lagos State. This shows that counselling approaches employed by school counsellors have a direct influence on how conflicts are managed and resolved within the school environment. The outcome of the study suggests that the employment of more effective counselling intervention by counsellors will likely resolve interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts among students. The study's outcome aligns with earlier research findings. The study of Eze and Okonkwo (2020) observed a strong positive relationship between the adoption of mediation-based counselling strategies and improved student behaviour and conflict resolution outcomes, especially in urban secondary schools. The researchers recommended the use of structured counselling interventions

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in reducing tensions and encourage dialogue among quarreling students. Likewise, counselling strategies such as cognitive-behavioral interventions and emotional regulation training significantly enhance the conflict resolution competencies of school counsellors, especially in

adolescent-focused environments (Onukwufor & Oyekanmi, 2018). The study of Adebayo and Olanrewaju (2019) observed that counsellors who utilized a combination of affective (e.g., empathy training) and behavioral (e.g., anger management) interventions were more likely to adopt collaborative conflict resolution styles, which promote long-term interpersonal harmony. This shows that the type of counselling strategy significantly induce the conflict resolution styles employed by school counsellors.

Conclusion

This research investigated the relationship between counselling interventions and conflict resolution styles among counsellors in secondary schools in Lagos State. Findings show that counsellors predominantly adopt collaborative and compromising conflict resolution styles, which reflect a commitment to fostering mutual understanding and cooperative problem-solving among students.

Furthermore, counsellors apply a variety of intervention strategies, with mediation, empathy and validation, emotional regulation training, restorative dialogue, and CBT being the most frequently used. These approaches indicate a balanced application of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral techniques to support adolescents in managing conflicts.

A statistically significant positive correlation between counselling interventions and conflict resolution styles was established, indicating that counsellors who apply effective interventions are more likely to use constructive and adaptive resolution methods. This underscores the importance of equipping school counsellors with the right tools and training to foster peaceful school environments and promote adolescents' interpersonal development.

Recommendations

1. Counsellors should be exposed to regular and modern-day training and workshops to increase both intervention and conflict resolution skills for continuous capacity Building for
2. In other to better manage adolescent conflict, emotional Intelligence Training which incorporates self-regulation and empathy should be integrated in training to enhance counsellors' abilities
3. Counsellors should continue to prioritize student-focused techniques like restorative dialogue and empathy-based interventions that promote trust and open communication.
4. Schools should promote the use of well-researched methods such as CBT and mediation, ensuring that counsellors are trained to apply them appropriately in school settings.

5. Education authorities should provide clear policy frameworks that support conflict resolution through counselling, including the provision of resources, guidelines, and time allocation for effective counselling practices.

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