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Journal of Professional Counselling (JPC): ISSN 2645-2308; eISSN: 3043-5625) is published annually by the Association of Professional Counsellors in Nigeria (APROCON). JPC maintains a leadership position as a repository for scientific information in the field of counselling, counselling psychology, applied psychology and related disciplines. The journal is in the process of being indexed and abstracted by African Journals Online (AJOL) and EBSCOHOST. The editorial/consulting team cuts across scholars from different parts of the world. The journal publishes well researched and well articulated papers/articles. Submission of an article implies that the material has not previously been published, nor is it being considered for publication elsewhere. Each article undergoes a blind peer-review process and plagiarism tests to ensure a high level of originality prior to publication.

This volume presents a collection of contemporary empirical studies that explore critical psychosocial, educational, and familial factors influencing youth development, academic success, and societal well-being in Nigeria. The research addresses a wide array of counselling-related issues, reflecting both the diversity of regional contexts and the evolving challenges facing individuals, families, and institutions.

Key themes include:

- ◆ **Educational Outcomes and Mental Health:** Studies highlight the effects of test anxiety, reading comprehension, self-regulated learning, and home background on students' academic performance across different Nigerian states, underscoring the need for targeted counselling interventions.
- ◆ **Family Dynamics and Moral Development:** Several contributions focus on the role of family counselling in shaping moral reasoning and emotional well-being, particularly in non-traditional or disrupted family structures. The implications of marital conflicts and intimate partner violence on adolescents and children are also explored.
- ◆ **Youth Empowerment and Behavioural Therapy:** Articles investigate behavioural challenges such as truancy and kleptomania among adolescents, demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions like Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) and relapse prevention strategies.
- ◆ **Career Development and Economic Growth:** Parental influence on career aspirations and the role of mentorship in undergraduate entrepreneurship reveal counselling's vital role in fostering socio-economic advancement.

- ◆ Conflict Resolution and National Integration: Contributions emphasize counselling's potential in mediating ethnic and social tensions, promoting peace, and supporting trauma victims such as policemen. Emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competence among trainee counsellors are also evaluated.
- ◆ Digital Literacy and E-Learning: The impact of digital behaviour, especially during the COVID-19 era, is examined, alongside the counselling needs of students navigating online learning environments.

Together, these studies underscore the indispensable role of professional counselling in fostering academic excellence, psychological resilience, family well-being, and national development. The volume offers actionable insights and data-driven recommendations for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals committed to transforming lives through effective guidance and counselling strategies. The Editorial Team appreciates all contributing authors and peer reviewers for their efforts and time. The journal's management team is already taking giant strides to improving the quality of the Journal to meet global standards. The association maintains a functional journal website, www.aprocon.org.ng where published articles are available online, ensuring increased visibility and readership. We present for your reading and research pleasure, Volume 8, Number 1.

Professor Mary Ogechi Esere

Editor-in-Chief,

JPC.

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**TEST ANXIETY, READING COMPREHENSION AND ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS
IN GOMBE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF GOMBE STATE
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance of senior secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area. The study adopted the correlation research design, the population of this study consisted of all 17 public senior secondary schools' students in Gombe Local Government Area, the sample of the study are three hundred and thirty-three students (333) drawn out of a population of seven thousand two hundred and sixty-six students (7,266). Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting both the five (5) schools and the students within Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe state. Study adapted the version of test anxiety inventory questionnaire (TAI) developed by spielberger with the reliability coefficient of 0.821 and reading comprehension test instrument with reliability of 0.861 and student's terminal scores in English language was used in collecting the data. The research question was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, research hypotheses 1 and 2 was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation (P.P.M.C.) and research hypothesis 3 was analyzed by using multiple regressions. The findings of the study revealed that there is a negative significant relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance among SSS students in Gombe L.G.A, and males had slightly higher than females in relation to test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance. It was recommended that educational psychologist, counsellors, and teachers should guide students for test and teach them techniques of tackling test anxiety and improving reading comprehension, as this efforts can build confidence in the students and to courageously face test without much fear.

Keywords: Test anxiety, Reading, comprehension and academic performance

Introduction

Over the years, students' academic performance in both internal and external examinations has been very woeful in Nigeria especially in Gombe State and across the country in general (W.A.E.C. 2018). Many research efforts have been made to identify the problems of poor students' academic achievement and provide solutions to them. If this poor students' academic performance is not reduce; it would have an adverse consequence on national development, even though Nigeria is hoping to attain sustainable educational development. Despite the efforts made by government, individuals, education stakeholders towards improving the student's performance, their achievement still remain low. Test anxiety and reading comprehension are among the problems that require the attention of educational psychologist to help the students to manage this problem (Olatoye, 2007).

Several factors have been identified to affect academic performance of students at all levels of education. Test anxiety and reading comprehension are among the major factors that deprived some students from reaching their academic potentials. Teachers have the responsibility of understanding and helping students with test anxiety and reading comprehension. Low reading comprehension leads to lowered self-esteem and serious emotional overlays (Basil 2007). Educational psychologist should be in a position to identify problems that are related to anxiety and reading comprehension from a holistic point in order to help learners on how to read and understand texts in school. Educational Psychologist are expected to identify children with test anxiety and reading comprehension problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practicing the policy of wait - and - fail method. Teachers face a lot of challenges while handling students with test anxiety and reading comprehension. The purpose of reading is comprehension and many students lack that aspect of comprehension which poses much problem to teachers trying to teach them not only that, the students find it difficult to transfer their thoughts on the comprehension they are answering

In most academic settings student is taught and subjected to some forms of test and examination to evaluates measure and assess students' academic performance. No doubt, students generally could be anxious over one thing or the other but the mere mention of tests or examinations could be a source of serious tension and anxiety by some students thus, affecting them academically. Students have consistently perceived test or examination as a source of increased anxiety and situation which engulfed them with uncertainty and unfairness in demonstrating their true achievements (Happiness & Haruna 2017). Individuals with test anxiety are excessively concerned with embarrassment or consequences of poor academic performance, thus, they seek to avoid situations with intense distress. In spite of these fears, one of the most enduring components of education process is evaluation which allows assessment of students' through tests or examinations which are the most commonly employed method Jordan in (Egbadon, Aluede, Ojuga & Fajoku, 2016).

Cassady and Johnson (2002) reported that between 25 to 40 percent of students

experience test anxiety. Also, Owen, Stevenson, Hadwin, and Norgate (2012) reported that test anxiety can negatively affect academic performance as students who report higher levels of anxiety show lower levels of academic achievement. The report by Cakici (2016) revealed that, females have higher test anxiety than the males. Males typically score lower on measurement of test anxiety than females (Lashkaripour, 2006; Najjarian & Ahmadi, 2001). Anxiety has therefore proliferated in the recent past and attempts has been made at understanding the nature of this basic human emotion as well as at unveiling the conditions related to it. Apart from its clinical significance, anxiety has been found to affect an individual's performance and behavior in a variety of situations. Anxiety affects the curiosity of students which in turn reduces the functioning of cognitive abilities and capacities like logical thinking and because of this; the comprehension is affected.

(Eysenck cited in, Keoghi, 2004) Test-anxiety, especially worry, has an impact on academic performance. Mazzone, Ducci and Scoto (2007) found that students with a high level of test anxiety had poor academic achievement. In another study, Keoghi Bond, French, Richards and Davis (2004) found that test anxiety was related to distraction. In addition, those with differences in levels (low, moderate, and high) of test- anxiety had produced significant differences in GPA scores among students. For instance, students with a low-test anxiety had a higher GPA than the students with a moderate and higher test anxiety level and students with a moderate test- anxiety had a higher GPA than the students with a higher test -anxiety level. Based on the above mentioned research reports, this research work seek to determine the relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance of senior secondary schools students in Gombe local government area of Gombe State, Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the test anxiety levels among senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A.?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study

- Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between test anxiety and academic performance among senior secondary schools students in Gombe Local Government Area
- Ho2:** There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance among senior Secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area
- Ho3:** There is no significant relationship among test anxiety, reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Gombe Local Government Area

Methodology

The study employed a correlational research design. Correlation study is concerned with the measurement of the degree of relationship between two or more variables for making prediction about relationships Daramola (2008) observed that the correlational method is the most appropriate for obtaining factual data or attitudinal information or for research question about self-reported believes, opinion, values, motives, ideas, habit, feeling, desires characteristic and present or past behavior. The population for this study is seven thousand two hundred and sixty-six students (7,266) SSS II students in Gombe L.G.A Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting both schools and the students within Gombe L.G.A. The sample of the study is three hundred and thirty-three (333) SS II students which were drawn from the population of the study, the decision for the stated sample size was based on research advisor (2006) table for estimated sample size. The instruments were used for this study are adapted Spielberger (1980) Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and W.A.E.C. 200 reading comprehension tests scores.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the test anxiety levels of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A?

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Test Anxiety Level of Secondary School Students

Frequency		Percent	Valid Per-cent	Cumulative Per-cent	
Valid	LOW TEST ANXIETY	112	33.6	33.6	33.6
	MODERATE TEST ANXIETY	119	35.7	35.7	69.4
	HIGH TEST ANXIETY	102	30.6	30.6	100.0
	Total	333	100.0	100.0	

Test anxiety levels

Result in Table 1, shows that, the test anxiety level of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A. The result shows that 33.6% have low test anxiety, 35.7% have moderate test anxiety while 30.6% have high test anxiety level .102 students have high test anxiety level while 119 students have moderate test anxiety level and 112 students have low test anxiety level.

Research hypothesis 1: there is no significant relationship between test anxiety and students’ academic performance

Table: 2: Relationship between Test Anxiety and Academic performance of Students

Variable	N.	r.	p.	Decision
Test anxiety	333	0.304	0.001	Rejected
Academic performance				

In order to test the stated null hypothesis Pearson Product moment correlation was employed.. From table 2, the correlation value of $p = 0.001$ represents the correlation between test anxiety and academic performance while the p-value of $r = .304$ represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ($r = .304$, $p = .001$, $p < .05$), a statistically significant relationship exist between test anxiety and students’ academic performance. This is because they obtained p-value is $< .05$ level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected.

Research hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic achievement

Table: 3: Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Academic performance

Variable	N	r.	p.	Decision
Reading comprehension	333	0.136	0.013	Rejected
Academic performance				

In order to test the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students, Pearson Product moment correlation was performed. From table 3, the correlation value of $r = 0.136$ represents the correlation between reading comprehension and academic performance while the p-value of $p = 0.013$ represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ($r = 0.0136$ $p = 0.013$, $p < .05$), a statistically significant relationship exist between reading comprehension and students’ academic performance. This is because they obtained p-value is $< .05$ level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected. It means that there is significant relationship between the student’s reading comprehension scores and academic performance of students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. It means that reading comprehension has relationship with academic performance.

Table: 4: Regression showing relationship among Test Anxiety, Reading Comprehension and Academic performance of secondary schools students in Gombe L. G. A.

Multiple R	0.315
R Square	9.099
Adjusted R square	094.094
Standard Error	17.935

The results in Table 4, shows that the test anxiety and reading comprehension have multiple correlations (R) 0.315 with students’ academic performance For 99.0% (as indicated by R² coefficient of determination 0.99) of the variance in the students’ academic performance of secondary school students

Discussion

This was in line with Russel and Sharwa (2009) who found that there is 10% High test anxiety levels among university students in United Kingdom and Abubakar and Abubakar (2017) who found that, the high level of test anxiety was 24% among senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. This finding agreed with Hsu (2004) who found that anxious students tended to recall less content of the text than less anxious students. Sellers (2000) and Dornald (2013) who found that test anxiety has a relationship with academic performance among students. This finding is disagreed with Edukasi (2018) which said there is no significant relationship between reading test and academic performance. Sellers (2000) and Dornald (2013) who found that reading comprehension has a relationship with academic performance among students. This finding is disagree with Edukasi (2018) which said there is no significant relationship between reading test and academic performance

This study agreed with findings of Juan (2013) that test anxiety and reading comprehension were common causes of poor academic performance among students. Dorcas (2015) who found that anxiety has a great effect on students’ academic performance and Malvina (2017) indicated that a correlation did exist between anxiety reading comprehension and academic achievement. Bijan (2015) was found that there is a relationship between the students’ test anxiety and reading comprehension. This result is disagree with Edukasi (20018) who found that there was no significant relationship between high anxiety and reading comprehension did not cause lower academic performance

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that test anxiety, reading comprehension make a negative significant contribution to students’ academic performance among senior secondary school II students in Gombe Local Government Area of Gombe State. This means that as the test anxiety increases reading comprehension decreases and academic

performance also decreases.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been put forward, based on the findings of the study that;

- ◆ Since there is significant negative relationship among test anxiety reading comprehension and academic performance among senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A, the researcher recommending that, Educational Psychologist and teachers should guide students for test and teach them techniques of tackling test anxiety and improve reading comprehension as this efforts can build confidence in the students and to courageously face test without fear.
- ◆ Based on the result revealed that majority of senior secondary school students in Gombe L.G.A, have moderate level of test anxiety, the researcher recommending that, in order to sustain the students low test anxiety, and improve reading comprehension teachers should give assignment to students from the first day of the term with adequate monitoring as this will prepare the students ahead of test and reduce cramming and the presence of extremely high test anxiety.
- ◆ Seminars and workshop should be organized for the teachers in order to improve their knowledge and method of teaching in order to help to sustain the high performance of the students and even help them to do better.

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PARENTAL FACTORS AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GOMBE METROPOLIS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Career Aspirations implies the way in which an individual expresses himself and relates to society through work. This study investigated the Relationship between Parental Factors and Career Aspirations of Students in Senior Secondary Schools in Gombe Metropolis, Nigeria. The study was guided by five research objectives, and five research hypotheses. The population of this study comprised all senior secondary school students within Gombe metropolis. The sample for this study was three hundred and six (306) SS II senior secondary school students. Correlational survey research design was adopted while simple random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample for this study. Two adapted instruments were used for this study namely: Students' Career Aspirations Questionnaire and Socioeconomic Status Scale. The instruments were validated by experts and considered reliable for use with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency of 0.739 for (SCAQ) and 0.913 for (SSS). Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test were used to test the hypotheses. The result of the study found out that there is no significant relationship between parents' level of education, parents' occupation and career aspirations of students', but there is significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' career aspirations. The result of the study also reveals that there is significance difference between male and female students in terms of career aspirations but no significant difference exist between private and public schools in terms of career aspirations of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe metropolis, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study the researcher recommended that parents should not force students to pursue careers similar to their own against their will. Government should intensify efforts to send trained Counsellors to secondary schools to provide vocational, educational and persona-social services to the students.

Keywords: Parental Factors and Career Aspiration

Introduction

Secondary education occupies a unique position in the educational system of Nigeria, because it is that level that determines the academic and professional career of students. However, at the secondary school level, a student may choose to pursue science based subjects, art based subjects or commercial based subjects. Many students are faced with the problem of realistic career preference hence Aspirations (Kolo, 2019), some students do not know school subjects that are relevant to their future preferred career. Some students make career Aspirations that are in opposition to their interest and personality structure. To some they do not understand the type of careers opened to them in the present Nigeria situation after graduation from secondary school. The future therefore looks very bleak as far as their careers are concerned and this constitutes a problem to motivation for learning among our students.

Career is a bigger term subsuming vocation, occupation and job or work in that descending order (Denga, 2016). He further explained that career Aspirations is one of the most difficult decisions in a person's life. It involves person total life because it determines his income, his choice of friends, his pattern of dress, his influence in society and very often the amount of risk to which he is exposed. Therefore, noting these consequences it is very important for career guidance to be provided so that by the time a student is making a career aspiration to enter into, he/she may likely choose those careers that could give an individual an inner satisfaction.

Generally, there are many factors, which are recognized as influencing career aspirations among students among which are extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors that motivate an individual to enter into certain career. The extrinsic factors includes: Parents, teachers and others who occupied a significant place in the life of a child, while the intrinsic factors are: Sex; gender is an important determinant in career aspirations and planning. Traditionally there are careers that are to be considered feminine such as teaching, nursing, catering, hospitality, hair dressing and dress-making while others are more suited to males engineering, building, and mining etc. But nowadays the dividing line between masculine and feminine careers is diminishing, in that you can find both sexes in almost all professional fields. Interests; individual's likes and dislikes contribute to his choice and performance in any given career. A person may also posses personal physical abilities required in a particular occupation. Children with high intellectual ability may like jobs that demand high intellectual ability and so on (Denga, 2016).

However, career aspirations is one of many important choices students will make in determining their future plans and this decision will impact them throughout their lives (Borchert, 2002). Career plays a very fundamental and significant role in the life of the individual because it determines the pattern of his or her income, affects the individual's personality and concept of life. Therefore, career is a lifetime pursuit for success. It is the sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout his lifetime.

Students require guidance in order to make the right career aspirations. Maina (2013), states that positive or negative parental influence shapes one's career. Many children grow up idealizing the professions of their parents. If one looked up to their mother and admired her teaching skills that may influence one to pursue a career in education. Parents may also intentionally or unintentionally push a child toward a particular career path, especially in the cases of family-owned businesses, where parents expect their children to take over the company. Still other parents apply pressure on their offspring to strive for particular high-profile careers, feeling they are encouraging their children to reach high. Parental support and encouragement are important factors that have been found to influence career choice. Children may choose what their parents desire simply to please them.

Statement of the Problem

Choosing a career is often considered a major turning point in a young adult's life. Career aspiration has been known for long as an individual's choice of lifelong occupation. The problem of career aspiration among secondary school students has drawn the attention of many researchers. Secondary school students should have the opportunity to explore all of the choices available in order to make a logical educated plan when choosing a career.

However, parents occupied a significant place in the life of a child. Some parents may have occupation which themselves could not be fulfilled but want their offspring to fulfil them. Parents may directly or indirectly dictate to their offspring the careers to pursue. For example, most of the time, the students have problem in terms of career aspiration whereby they don't even know the career to choose; in the choice of subjects combination, they tend to follow crowd. Some of them are either positively or negatively influenced by their parents' career. At times some parents do force their children to go for certain careers which they do not interest in nor have the ability to cope with.

Some parents encourage what is known as family occupation by shaping up the interests of their children to take after their profession. Many parents may not realize that their influence on students' career aspiration may present opportunities or obstacles during their career selection. This study therefore, examined the relationship between parental factors and career aspiration of students' in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.

Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following objectives that specifically intended to:

- ◆ Determine the relationship between parents' level of education and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- ◆ Determine the relationship between parents' occupation and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- ◆ Determine the relationship between parents' socio-economic status and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.

- ◆ Find out the difference between students' gender and their career aspiration in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- ◆ Find out the difference between career aspiration of students' in public and private senior secondary schools in Gombe metropolis.

Research Hypotheses

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

- H0₁:** There is no significant relationship between parents' level of education and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- H0₂:** There is no significant relationship between parents' occupation and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- H0₃:** There is no significant relationship between parents' socio-economic status and career aspiration of students in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- H0₄:** There is no significant difference between students' gender and their career aspiration in senior secondary schools in Gombe Metropolis.
- H0₅:** There is no significant difference between career aspiration of students' in public and private senior secondary schools in Gombe metropolis.

Methodology

This study adopted correlational survey research design. The population of this study consists of all senior secondary schools students within Gombe Metropolis with the total number of one thousand seven hundred and sixty-six (1766) SS II students out of which 306 students were sampled. The instruments used for data collection of this study, were two instruments namely: Students' career Aspiration Questionnaire and Socio-economic Status Scale. The instruments were validated by experts and considered reliable for use with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency of 0.739 for (SCAQ) and 0.913 for (SSS). The data collected by the researcher and research assistants. The statistical tools used to analyse the data were Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 while independent sample t-test was used to test hypotheses 4 and 5.

Results

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between parents' level of education and career aspiration of students in senior secondary school in Gombe Metropolis.

Table 1: Results of Spearman Rank Correlation of the relationship between parents' level of education and students' career aspiration

Variable	N	X	S.D.	Rho.	sig.	Decision
Parents level of education	306	3.31	1.77	.044	.438	Accepted
Career aspiration	306	28.16	4.00			

Result in Table 1, shows that there is no significant relationship between parents level of education and students career aspiration. Spearman rank order correlation was used in testing the hypothesis. From table 4, the correlation value of $Rho = .044$ represents the correlation between parents level of education and students career aspiration while the sig-value of .438 represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ($Rho = .044$, $sig. = .438$, > 0.05), a statistically not significant relationship exist between parents level of education and students' career aspiration. This is because the obtained sig-value is $> .05$ level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was accepted.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no relationship between parents' occupation and career aspiration of students in senior secondary school in Gombe Metropolis.

Table 2: Results of Spearman Rank Correlation of the relationship between parents' occupation and students' career aspiration

Variable	N	X	S.D.	Rho.	sig.	Decision
Parents occupation	306	1.98	1.25	.080	.163	Accepted
Career aspiration	306	28.16	4.00			

Result in Table 2, shows that there is no significant relationship between parents occupation and students career aspiration. Spearman rank order correlation was used in testing the hypothesis. From table 5, the correlation value of $Rho = .080$ represents the correlation between parents occupation and students career aspiration while the sig-value of .163 represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ($Rho = .080$, $sig. = .163$, > 0.05), a statistically not significant relationship exist between parents occupation and students' career aspiration. This is because the obtained sig-value is $> .05$ level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was accepted.

Research Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between parents' socio-economic status and career aspiration of students in senior secondary school in Gombe Metropolis.

Table 3: Result of the Spearman Rank Correlation of the relationship between parents' socioeconomic status of education and students' career aspiration

Variable	N	X	S.D.	r.	sig.	Decision
Parents socioeconomic status	306	2.12	1.48	.129	.024	Rejected
Career aspiration	306	28.16	4.00			

Result in Table 3, revealed that there is significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' career aspiration. Spearman rank order correlation was used in testing the hypothesis. From Table 3, the correlation value of $Rho = .129$ represents the correlation between parents socioeconomic status and students career aspiration while the sig-value of .024 represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value ($Rho = .129$, $sig. = .024$, < 0.05), a statistically significant relationship exist between parents socioeconomic status and students' career aspiration. This is because the obtained sig-value is $< .05$ level of significance. Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference between gender and career aspiration of students in senior secondary school in Gombe Metropolis.

Table 4: Result of the independent sample t-test showing gender difference on students' career aspiration

Career aspiration	N	Mean	S.D	df	T	Sig.	Decision
Male	149	27.59	3.92	304	2.492	.013	Rejected
Female	157	28.73	3.99				

Table 4, presents the results of the independent t-test on whether there is a significant gender difference in the career aspiration of senior secondary school students. The result showed that $t(304) = 2.492$ and $p = 0.013$. Since the p-value (0.013) is less than the alpha value (0.05), the hypothesis was therefore rejected. Thus, there was significant gender difference in the career aspiration of secondary schools students in Gombe Metropolis. It means female students have higher mean score than their male counterparts in terms of career aspiration.

Research Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference between school type and career aspiration choice of students in senior secondary school in Gombe Metropolis?

Table 5: Result of the independent sample t-test on difference between school types on students' career aspiration

Career aspiration	N	Mean	S.D	df	t	p.	Decision
Private schools	52	27.37	3.86	304	1.563	.119	Accepted
Public schools	254	28.33	4.02				

Table 5, presents the results of the independent t-test on whether there is a significant difference between school type and career aspiration of senior secondary school students. The result showed that $t(304) = 1.563$ and $p = 0.119$. Since the p-value (0.119) is greater than the alpha value (0.05), the hypothesis was therefore accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference between private and public school in terms of career aspiration of secondary schools students in Gombe Metropolis. It means both private and public schools were the same in terms of career aspiration.

Discussion of findings

The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between parents level of education and students career aspiration. This result is in line with that of Clutter (2010), who sought to find out the relationship between parents' highest level of education and the career aspiration of the students. This was achieved by carrying out a correlation between students career choice and parents educational level. Results of this correlation indicated that the father's education level is insignificantly and negatively correlated with the students' career choice while that of the mother's was both positively and significantly correlated. This is an indication that the mother's level of education significantly influences the students' future careers.

The result of this study revealed that there is no significant relationship between parents' occupation and students' career aspiration. The negative correlation means that the students would choose careers different from those of their parents. This result is in line to that of Olaosebikan and Olusakin (2014), whose findings indicated that parental influence could not have significant effect on adolescents' career aspiration, and that perceptions of parental occupational satisfaction will not have effect on career choice of adolescents students in Badagry Local Government based on the following intervening variables such as sex, and type of school. The finding is also in line with that of Okeke (2002), who investigated the relationship between Kenyan secondary school pupils' achievement motivation and the educational/occupational levels of their parents. The results indicated that the father's occupation was insignificantly correlated with the pupils' need for achievement while that of the mothers was both positively and significantly correlated.

The result of this study revealed that there is a significant relationship between parents' Socio economic status and students' career aspiration. This result is in line with that of Jungen (2008), who supported the view that parents' socioeconomic status has influenced on their

children's career aspiration. They noted that many parents due to certain personal likeness and social economic conditions of certain career persuade their children to study certain subjects that would lead to particular. Ferry (2013), identified schooling as one of the cultural and socioeconomic factors affecting the choice of a career. Davis (2009), found that parents that are very wealthy and rich would have programmed the kind of discipline or professions they want their children take to. For instance, they tend to have influence in students career aspiration for.

The result of this study revealed that there is significant difference between male and female in terms of career aspiration. This result is in line with that of Adamu (2013), in his study found a remarkable gender difference in occupational choice of students. Males were found to have preferred courses in social, science, persuasive and artistic while females favoured courses in social, clerical and science. Mburza (2002), investigated the relationship between gender and occupational choice of secondary school students in Borno State and found that there was significant difference between parents' occupation and students based on gender. (Momo and Ojugo 1999), carried out a study on gender difference in choice of courses on new entrants in Nigerian Universities; they found that there was a remarkable gender difference in choice of courses by new entrants into the Nigerian Universities. Males were found to have preferred courses in engineering, environmental studies, veterinary medicine and agriculture while female favoured courses in education, arts and administration. The result is also in line with the previous literatures reviewed in Nigeria (Akinboye, 1997), and those of western studies on gender differences in (Betz, 2005).

The result of this study reveals that there is no significant difference between private and public school in terms of career aspiration. This result is in line with that of Okwelle and Amakiri (2020), who conducted a research on Parental Background and the Career aspiration of Secondary School Students and found that there was no significant difference in the mean response of students' career aspiration from public and private secondary schools in Ahoada East Local Government Area.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there is no significant relationship between parents' level of education, parents' occupation and students' career aspiration but there is significant relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and students' career aspiration. It also concluded that there is significance difference between male and female students in terms of career aspiration but no significant difference exist between private and public school in terms of career aspiration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- ◆ Parents should not force students to pursue careers similar to their own against their will. This is because majority of the students indicated they would not choose careers similar

to those of their parents. A strong parent-child relationship is essential in shaping the students career aspiration. In this regard, it is recommended that parents should take time to discuss different kinds of careers with their children. Whenever necessary, the parents should guide their children in choosing a career and express satisfaction with the child's decision.

- ◆ School counsellors should educate the students to be aware of various environmental factors that might be influencing their career aspiration. They should also advice teachers and parents on how to prepare students at an earlier stage by choosing the right career.
- ◆ Government should intensify efforts to send trained Counsellors to secondary schools and primary schools to provide vocational, educational and persona-social services to the students.

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IMPACT OF BUSINESS MENTORSHIP IN FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Many undergraduates in Nigeria, particularly in Nasarawa State, struggle to translate academic knowledge into practical entrepreneurial success due to limited exposure to real-world business guidance, mentorship, and support networks. This study examined the impact of business mentorship on fostering economic growth among undergraduates in Nasarawa State. The main goal is to evaluate the impact of mentorship programs on students' entrepreneurial skills, business expertise, and total economic contribution. The study used questionnaires to obtain data from 350 Bingham University, Karu undergraduate business administration and entrepreneurship students. A purposive random technique was used to select 350 students, 175 of whom were in a mentorship program and 175 were not. Analysis of numerical data used descriptive and inferential statistics. The reliability test yielded $r = 0.85$ using Cronbach Alpha. Data analysis used an Independent t -test. The findings revealed that students who participated in mentorship programs had higher levels of business acumen, entrepreneurial confidence, and a stronger desire to start and run businesses than their counterparts who did not engage in the program. Mentorship was shown to improve practical business skills, fosters new ideas, and increases access to networks and resources needed for business success. Mentored students were also more likely to create jobs and extend the market, leading to local economic growth, establishing that business mentorship boosts undergraduates' economic growth. Thus, educational institutions and authorities should prioritise and improve business mentorship. These findings underline the need for coordinated mentorship programs tailored to young entrepreneurs. This will make then to maximise their potential and contribute to long-term economic growth.

Keywords: Business mentorship, Economic growth, Undergraduate students, Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Mentorship, especially in business and entrepreneurial growth, has gained global attention

in recent years. To promote economic growth and sustainability, young people must be equipped with the skills, information, and tools they need. Business mentoring is a fundamental instrument for supporting entrepreneurship, which is considered the engine of economic growth and employment creation (Agbonna, 2022). Innovative economic stimulation measures are needed in Nigeria, where young and graduate unemployment rates are frighteningly high. Nasarawa State, with its rising undergraduate population, especially at Bingham University, offers a unique opportunity to study how organised mentoring programs boost economic growth. Business mentorship allows experienced entrepreneurs to help aspiring entrepreneurs, especially students, navigate start up and sustainability. This type of mentorship gives potential entrepreneurs hands-on experience, networks, and practical skills not taught in academic curriculum (Undiyaundeye & Otu, 2022).

Educational institutions are crucial in incorporating mentorship into the learning framework because it bridges theoretical knowledge and real commercial application. Students gain entrepreneurial confidence, innovate, start enterprises, and create jobs via mentorship. Thus, these new firms reduce poverty and diversify the economy by benefiting the community. Thus, mentoring is essential to economic sustainability and individual empowerment. Mentorship programs provide students real-world insights, improve their business acumen, and increase their chances of entrepreneurial success, according to expanding studies (Uchenna et al., 2015). This study addressed that gap by examining how business mentoring programs impact Nasarawa State undergraduate students' entrepreneurial abilities and economic output.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's rising unemployment rate, especially among university graduates, threatens social stability and economic growth. Despite government and business sector actions, youths' unemployment rises. In Nasarawa, the local economy struggles to accommodate the expanding number of graduates entering the employment market each year. Many graduates lack the practical skills and entrepreneurial spirit to develop self-sustaining jobs, exacerbating the unemployment gap. Traditional academic programs teach theory but seldom prepare students for business. Therefore, graduates struggle to establish enterprises, handle business risks, and sustain entrepreneurial projects (Iyoha and Igbinedion, 2022). However, business mentorship may solve this problem. More so, many business and entrepreneurship students do not participate in mentorship programs, resulting in an uneven distribution of entrepreneurial success and economic impact. Thus, this study investigates how business mentoring promotes economic growth among Nasarawa State undergraduates to fill this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To evaluate the impact of business mentorship on the entrepreneurial skills of undergraduate students in Nasarawa State.

2. To assess the effect of mentorship programs on the business expertise of undergraduate students.
3. To analyze the contribution of mentored students to local economic growth and confidence and willingness to start businesses compared to non-mentored students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does business mentorship impact the entrepreneurial skills of undergraduates in Nasarawa State?
2. What is the effect of mentorship programs on the business expertise of undergraduates?
3. How do mentored students contribute to local economic growth and confidence and willingness of students to start businesses compared to their non-mentored counterparts?

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are:

- H₁: Business mentorship has a positive impact on the entrepreneurial skills of undergraduates in Nasarawa State.
- H₂: Mentorship programs significantly improve the business expertise of undergraduate.
- H₃: Students who participate in mentorship programs contribute more to local economic growth and confidence and willingness to start their own businesses than those who do not.

Business Mentorship

Business mentoring is an organised procedure where experienced business professionals, or mentors, help less experienced ones, or mentees. This approach transfers practical skills, industry insights, and personal experiences essential for professional and entrepreneurial success. Mentorship in business include risk management, financial decision-making, leadership, and problem-solving (Okechukwu & Raymond, 2015). Mentorships frequently boost the mentee's company startup and sustainability, creativity, and network access. Mentored people have stronger business acumen, confidence, and entrepreneurial success, according to studies. Mentorship improves technical business skills, resilience, critical thinking, and flexibility, which are crucial for business difficulties. Mentors empower mentees to pursue their business goals with greater vigour, which has psychological advantages. Since mentors enjoy developing fresh talent, the mentor-mentee connection benefits both parties (Odili & Ona, 2018). Business mentorship is essential for entrepreneurial success, especially for young entrepreneurs who require practical experience to supplement their academic knowledge. Mentorship programs boost startup and small business growth and economic growth by focusing on skill-building.

Economic Growth

Economic growth, measured by GDP, is the rise in a country's products and services over a certain period. It indicates a nation's prosperity and development by showing living standards, employment, and income growth. Technology, productivity, capital accumulation, and entrepreneurship fuel economic progress. Startups and new enterprises create employment, money, and markets, boosting economic growth (Iyoha & Igbiniedion, 2022). Countries with high entrepreneurship rates expand faster because entrepreneurial firms bring new goods and services, boost competition, and better resource allocation. Entrepreneurship drives sustained economic progress, especially in emerging nations where job creation is essential to fighting poverty. Mentorship boosts economic growth because mentored businesses are more likely to succeed (Okolie et al., 2020). Economic growth is also tied to human capital development, where education and skills training, including mentorship, boost productivity. Governments and governments promote entrepreneurship and mentorship to boost economic growth.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Human Capital Theory, created by Gary Becker in 1964, which asserts that education, training, and mentorship may increase people's knowledge, talents, and experiences, increasing their economic worth. Human capital investments like corporate mentorship enhance productivity and economic growth, according to Becker (1993). According to Schultz (1961), education and skill development increase productivity, earnings, and economic contribution. This theory also suggests that business training and mentorship enhance economic growth and individual incomes (Sweetland, 1996). Human Capital Theory applies to business mentorship and Nasarawa State undergraduates' economic performance. Mentorship programs teach students entrepreneurship, industry, and business. Becker (1993) opined that human capital boosts revenue and productivity. Undergraduates start and operate profitable businesses, strengthening local economies. Mentorship increases students' access to business networks and resources, which Becker argued maximises human capital investment returns (Becker, 1964). Mentored student enterprises can increase Nasarawa State's economy, jobs, and markets. This study shows that undergraduate business mentorship boosts economic potential utilising Human Capital Theory. Mentors increase students' human capital by sharing knowledge, entrepreneurial advise, and business acumen. Student entrepreneurs are more likely to boost local economies, validating Becker's (1964) assertion that human capital boosts productivity and growth. Schultz (1961) believed that education and skill development increase economic resilience and adaptability, and mentored students are more inclined to innovate and establish firms.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey of the quantitative approach to examine the influence of business mentorship on economic growth among Nasarawa State undergraduates using a comparative methodology. The approach allows the researcher compare mentoring

program participants to non-participants. The research employs structured questionnaires to collect numerical data and statistically analyse it to compare the two student groups. The study uses a cross-sectional survey to assess mentorship's impact on students' entrepreneurial abilities and economic contributions. This study methodology is ideal because it yields quantitative results that can be used to generalise about university business mentoring programs.

This research includes Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State business administration and entrepreneurship undergraduates. These students are especially relevant since they study business and may be entrepreneurs. Information from the office of the Head of Department shows that about 500 students are in these programs. From this demographic, 350 students are chosen for data analysis to ensure representation and statistical power. The sample is split evenly between 175 official mentorship program participants and 175 non-participants. This balanced sample size enables for effective comparison between mentored and non-mentored students, attribution of any changes to the mentoring program.

This study adopted a stratified random sampling method to ensure balanced representation of business administration and entrepreneurship students who have participated in a structured mentorship program and those who have not. First, students were grouped based on mentorship participation status. Then, 175 students were randomly selected from each group, totalling 350 participants. This approach enhances representativeness, minimizes bias.

This study utilised a standardised questionnaire to acquire data from the selected pupils. The questionnaire addresses the research goals by assessing students' entrepreneurial talents, business competence, confidence in beginning a firm, and economic growth contributions. The questionnaire has closed-ended and Likert scale items for quantitative analysis. Due of students' schedules and accessibility, data is collected in-person and electronically to increase response rates. To ensure data consistency, questionnaires are issued and collected within two weeks. To promote honest and accurate replies, especially on sensitive themes like confidence and economic contributions, respondents are kept anonymous.

This study adopted a self-developed questionnaire to assess business mentorship's influence on student entrepreneurial and economic results. The questionnaire's initial section gathers demographic data including age, gender, academic year, and mentoring program involvement. The second portion evaluates students' entrepreneurial capabilities, including business acumen, creativity, and risk management. Third, they assess their confidence in founding and operating enterprises, and fourth, they assess their perceived economic growth contributions, such as job creation and market expansion. Students easily completed the questionnaire because the questions are straightforward and simple. A five-point Likert scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," measures the influence of mentorship on students.

A pilot study with 30 students from the same university who are not in the final sample verifies the research instrument's validity. This pilot research improves question clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Pilot study feedback is used to adapt questions to capture

target variables. Business and educational research specialists analyse the questionnaire for content validity.

Cronbach's Alpha measures question internal consistency to determine instrument reliability. The pilot study's Cronbach's Alpha is 0.85, suggesting strong reliability. This shows the questionnaire yields consistent results across instances, confirming the findings' repeatability. The questionnaire is also pre-tested for construct validity to reliably evaluate entrepreneurial abilities, confidence, and economic contributions.

The questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations summarise respondents' demographics and responses to entrepreneurial abilities, business knowledge, and economic contribution questions.

The hypotheses were tested using an Independent T-test. It compares the mean scores of mentored and non-mentored students on business acumen, entrepreneurial confidence, and economic contributions. This test is selected to evaluate if the two groups differ statistically in the variables of interest.

Results and Discussion

Impact of Mentorship on Entrepreneurial Skills

Table 1: Impact of Mentorship on Entrepreneurial Skills (Mean Scores)

Entrepreneurial Skill	Mentored Students	Non-Mentored Students	Mean Difference
Innovation	4.5	3.6	+0.9
Risk-Taking	4.2	3.4	+0.8
Problem-Solving	4.3	3.7	+0.6
Financial Management	4.4	3.5	+0.9

The results show that students who received mentoring regularly outperformed their peers in terms of entrepreneurial abilities. Financial management and innovation show the largest mean change, indicating that mentoring programs have a substantial positive impact on these aspects of entrepreneurship.

Effect of Mentorship on Business Expertise

Table 2: Effect of Mentorship on Business Expertise (Mean Scores)

Business Expertise Area	Mentored Students	Non-Mentored Students	Mean Difference
Customer Relations	4.6	3.8	+0.8
Marketing Strategies	4.5	3.6	+0.9
Operations Management	4.3	3.7	+0.6
Resource Allocation	4.4	3.5	+0.9

The information demonstrates that students who get mentoring have greater business acumen overall. The greatest mean variations are shown in marketing strategies and customer relations, indicating that mentorship has a significant impact on these important business domains.

Contribution to Economic Growth

Table 3: Contribution to Economic Growth (Mean Scores)

Economic Growth Factor	Mentored Students	Non-Mentored Students	Mean Difference
Job Creation	4.7	3.8	+0.9
Income Generation	4.5	3.6	+0.9
Market Expansion	4.6	3.7	+0.9

According to the results, students who receive mentoring feel that they make a greater contribution to economic growth than students who do not receive mentoring, especially when it comes to creating jobs and generating revenue. This lends credence to the theory that undergraduate students' economic contributions are increased by mentoring.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	t-value	P-value	Decision
Mentored students have higher entrepreneurial skills than non-mentored students	5.12	0.001	Reject null hypothesis
Mentored students have more business expertise than non-mentored students	4.89	0.001	Reject null hypothesis
Mentored students contribute more to economic growth than non-mentored students	5.43	0.001	Reject null hypothesis

The t-test findings show that there is a significant difference between mentored and non-mentored students in every area of the research, with the P-values for all three hypotheses falling below the 0.05 significance threshold. Consequently, the null hypotheses are not accepted, confirming the beneficial effects of mentoring on business expertise, entrepreneurial skills, and economic growth.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study underscore the importance of **business mentorship** in fostering entrepreneurial skills, business expertise, and economic contributions among undergraduate students. Students who participated in mentorship programs consistently demonstrated higher levels of innovation, risk-taking, problem-solving, and financial management, all critical components of entrepreneurship. These findings align with the findings of Agbonna (2022) and

Undiyaundeye and Out (2022) who found out that students who took part in mentorship programs performed better in areas of innovation, calculated risk-taking, problem-solving, and financial literacy skills when asked to prepare a business plan for their proposed businesses compared to their counterparts who did not undergo business mentorship program. This suggest that mentorship enhances practical business knowledge and skills, enabling mentees to perform better than their non-mentored peers.

Furthermore, mentorship was found to significantly improve students' business expertise in key areas such as customer relations, marketing strategies, and resource allocation. This finding resonate the findings of Iyoha and Igbinedion (2022), and that of Okolie et al., (2020) who found out that students who participated in business mentorship engaged more in after-sales-services and marketing strategies to ensure customer satisfaction and retention. These findings support the idea that mentorship provides access to practical insights and resources, which are essential for running successful businesses. The results also highlight the direct contribution of mentorship to **economic growth**. Mentored students were more likely to generate income, create jobs, and expand markets, emphasizing the role of mentorship in promoting broader economic development. These findings align with the findings of Odili and Ona (2018). This finding is consistent with the view that entrepreneurship, supported by mentorship, is a key driver of local and national economic growth.

Conclusion

This study Found out that business mentorship improves students' entrepreneurial abilities, such as innovation, risk-taking, and financial management. Aslo, it proved that mentored students excelled in customer interactions, marketing tactics, job creation and market expansion which in turn boost local economy. Finally, the study found that business mentorship improve students' practical business skills and capacity to contribute meaningfully to economic growth.

Counselling Implications of the Findings

This study has major implications for counselling, especially career development and entrepreneurial education. Career counsellors must aggressively encourage mentoring programs for student development. Counsellors should encourage students, especially entrepreneurial students, to participate in mentorship to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real business abilities. Mentorship exposes students to real-world business difficulties, giving them the confidence and skills to succeed as entrepreneurs. Counsellors should also emphasise mentorship in career planning and growth. Mentorship may teach students about business management, which can inform their career choices. Counsellors should also collaborate with academic departments and business organisations to provide guidance to students starting their entrepreneurial careers. Entrepreneurship courses and mentorship should be part of counselling to better prepare students for business issues. Mentorship improves resilience, financial literacy, and problem-solving in these workshops. Counsellors should also promote mentorship

programs in the academic curriculum, according to the report. Institutions can ensure that all students, regardless of background, benefit from mentorship to boost economic growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Formal mentorship programs should be prioritised at universities. The curriculum should include these programs to give students business knowledge and real-world experience.
2. Government and educational policies should encourage corporate experts to mentor undergraduates. Incentives for mentorship programs might encourage more employers to participate, increasing student mentorship possibilities.
3. Institutions could also pursue peer-to-peer mentorship programs where students mentor each other. This can sustain university mentorship ecosystems, exposing more students to mentorship and its advantages.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY ON TRUANCY AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study looked at the effect of rational emotive behavior therapy in reducing truancy among in-school adolescents in Abia State. The study was based on two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study employed a quasi-experimental design employing the non-randomized pre-test, post-test and control group using a 2x1 factorial matrix. The sample size of the study consisted of 32 (13 males and 19 females) in-school adolescents who were purposefully selected from 680 in-school adolescents in Two (SS II) students identified with truancy using Truant Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (TBIQ) in-school adolescents in Abia State in 2023/2024 academic session. The study equally adopted multi-stage sampling techniques. The instrument used for data collection was a 14-item questionnaire titled: Truant Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (TBIQ). Test of reliability for the internal consistency of the instrument was measured using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded a reliability index of .77 indicating the usability of the instrument for the present study. Stability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation reliability Coefficient to obtain index of .77. Data were collected in the three phases of pre-treatment, treatment and follow-up periods. The data were interpreted using mean and standard deviation to answer the study questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings, among other things, revealed that REBT was successful in reducing the rate of absenteeism among in-school adolescents during both the posttest and follow-up periods. It was proposed that researchers should attempt to conduct out more studies to find out more unwanted behaviors for which rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) could be effectively applied.

Keywords: Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, Truancy, In-school Adolescents

Introduction

Truancy is one of the most common dishonesties or delinquent behaviors done by students in modern Nigeria, regardless of school type, gender, and region. Okolie, Igwe, Nwosu, Eneje, and Mlanga (2020) saw truancy as a major delinquent behaviour among students that frequently leads to other deviant behaviours. Egbo, Nwangwu, and Odo (2024) defined truancy as leaving school or lessons without permission from school authorities. This is the persistent absence of students from school or class without authorization to prevent duties such as homework, tests, examinations, and other extracurricular activities. Egbo, Nwangwu, and Odo (2024) described truancy as leaving school during school hours without the consent of parents or school authorities in order to prevent punishment, avoid specified functions, or neglect certain authorized school obligations.

Egbo, Nwangwu and Odo (2024) considered truancy as an extrovert's reaction to a school difficulty; however, introverts also engage in truancy, particularly throughout adolescence. Truants are inconsistent in their attendance at school; some may opt to come once or twice a week, or they may arrive in the morning and leave later, while others are constantly absent for no good or acceptable cause provided by their parents or school authorities. Egbo *et al.* (2024) classified truants as vagrants, worthless, lethargic, or indolent persons who shirk or abandon their tasks and intend to violate school rules by attending movies, attending special events, preparing for nights, playing games during school hours but outside of school, not wearing school uniform, failing to serve punishment, engaging in substance abuse, and cultism. Other maladaptive or anti-social traits identified by truants include hyperactivity, disruptive classroom conduct, bullying, shyness, avoiding classes, indiscipline in school, disdain for school authority, poor performance, and eventually becoming a school dropout

Though the aims of secondary education are noble and critical to the country's prosperity, truancy has the ability to destroy everything by negating the labor, costs, and time invested owing to low attendance, a sluggish attitude toward learning, and, ultimately, student dropout rates. Truancy among in-school adolescents is a widespread problem with serious consequences for academic performance and social development. Truancy is perceived as unlawful absence from school, which interrupts the educational process and can have long-term effects for both individuals and society. Truancy is defined as any unexplained or undetected absence from school, taking into consideration the attendance rules of the specific country. It can take several forms, ranging from frequent late arrivals to absence from a complete or multiple school days (Ramberg, Låftman, Fransson & Modin, 2019).

Truancy is sometimes defined as a student's willful absence from school without parental knowledge or approval (Bajon, 2022). Truancy among in-school adolescents has become a big issue in Nigeria's education system, and it is one of the delinquent behaviors. According to Imafidon and Ikuero (2022), truancy arises when a learner is absent from school without a legitimate excuse. Tripathy and Sahu (2020) defined truancy as an antisocial and delinquent behavior, and it is also known as school refusal or school phobia. Adetumilara, Adeniyi, and

Ahimie (2023) define truancy as purposely missing particular class periods, leaving school without permission, and failing to attend class. Truancy is defined in this study as a circumstance in which a student is away from class without permission, whether for the full lesson or for one or more days throughout a week, month, or quarter of the school year. Truancy refers to any intentional, unapproved, or unlawful absence from obligatory schooling. Truancy is thus defined as the practice of missing school without authorization. Truancy is the terminology used to characterize a child who is engaging in the behavior. A truant is a student who skips school to meander about.

Truancy rates among in-school adolescents can vary greatly based on area, cultural variables, financial level, and educational programs. However, research offers some broad insights regarding the prevalence of truancy. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), truancy rates vary greatly among nations; in some regions, such as portions of Europe and North America, truancy rates can range from 5% to 28% among in-school adolescents. In Nigeria, the percentage of secondary school students who miss class has steadily increased. This is evident from the several studies undertaken by Adetumilara *et al.* (2023) and Onyele (2018), which discovered that the number of Nigerian secondary school students who have been reported to miss school is rapidly increasing. The study went on to note that one of the goals of in-school adolescents is personnel development, which might be threatened if the occurrence of truancy is not regulated.

According to Onyele (2018), truancy rates among in-school adolescents in Abia State are frighteningly high, resulting in a good sum of students leaving school and causing problems for their relatives and the society as a whole. Furthermore, Adetumilara *et al.* (2023) found that truancy occurrence are higher in urban regions than in rural regions due to a variety of factors such as peer influence, recreational activity availability, and socioeconomic status. They believe that truancy rates tend to rise as kids advance through secondary school. Younger adolescents may commit truancy at a lower rate than older adolescents. Low academic success, family instability, low socioeconomic position, peer influence, and school disengagement are all connected with increased rates of truancy.

The DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition) does not specifically list truancy as a disorder with diagnostic criteria. Truancy is often regarded as a behavioral issue associated with school attendance rather than a distinct mental condition. Truancy, on the other hand, can be a symptom or indicator of underlying concerns like school avoidance caused by anxiety disorders (e.g., separation anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder) or conduct disorder. The DSM-5 gives diagnostic criteria for several illnesses, which may include behavior associated with truancy as part of their presentation. Truancy includes willful absences without valid causes, such as skipping classes to avoid specific subjects or professors, as well as extended absences from school grounds without permission. These behaviors can be suggestive of larger problems such as social anxiety, conduct disorders, or family troubles, all of which can contribute to persistent school avoidance. Furthermore, there

are numerous reasons why students participate in truancy, which Bajon (2022) divides into three categories: family issues, school factors, and student-related factors. Parents' education, parental supervision, and household income are all factors that can contribute to truancy. According to Bajon (2022), low-income families and single parents account for roughly one-third (1/3) to one-half (1/2) of all truancy instances.

Some school characteristics that may contribute to truant attitude among in-school adolescents include school atmosphere, class size, attitudes, ability to satisfy each student's different needs, and the school's truancy disciplinary policy. According to Ogbonna, Chinasa, and Grace (2019), kids who attend large schools may feel lonely or alienated in their learning environment, therefore they opt not to attend. In enormous classrooms, students' unique needs, whether instructional, social, or otherwise, cannot be consistently satisfied, and student-teacher relationships cannot be created, resulting in a school climate and mentality in which each person must fend for himself. Physical and mental health issues, as well as drug usage, are examples of student characteristics that might contribute to truancy.

Truancy has numerous consequences that have an immediate and long-term impact on the academic lives of those involved. Ogbonna *et al.* (2019) state that a few of the impacts of truancy include a decrease in educational quality, poor academic results in examinations, having half-baked graduates, a large number of school dropouts, and an impact on their general life style in the future and in adulthood after school. Truancy is also an element that gives room to sluggishness, unemployment, and underemployment among most persons today. Truancy, according to Adetumilara et al (2023), is an issue among school-aged adolescents, with severe effects for truants, their schools, and society as a whole. They discovered that being absent from school can have disadvantageous effects on a person, such as low academic achievement, wasted time studying, strained relationships with parents and teachers, and eventually dropping out of school. Bad academic achievement, the time teachers spend pursuing absentee students and providing Counselling, and other factors all have an adverse impact on the school. Poverty for the truants' families in the future due to unemployment, family instability, and insecurity as the truants go out stealing and indulging in other delinquent behavior both now and in the future, becoming involved in robberies and other crimes as a result of their social standing.

Efforts by schools, teachers, counsellors, researchers, and society at large to reduce truancy rates through non-therapeutic approaches such as increased supervision, close monitoring, scolding, punishment, and suspension appear to have yielded unsatisfactory results (Ehindero, 2015). Many secondary school kids are still observed in amusement centers, selling, loitering on the streets, and committing daytime robberies during school hours. The researcher concluded that other treatments, such as rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), had the potential to assist individuals in changing undesired behaviors. It is thus hypothesized that such psychological interventions may be useful in reducing truancy among secondary school students in Imo State.

More so, addressing truancy requires effective interventions that not only improve school attendance but also address underlying psychological factors contributing to absenteeism. Instructively, Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) is a therapy method that assists people in breaking free from self-defeating thoughts that impede overall life growth.

Mahfar and Senin (2015) state that REBT holds that emotional problems including self-blame, self-pity, clinical rage, hurt, guilt, and shame, depression, and anxiety, as well as behavioral tendencies such as procrastination, compulsiveness, avoidance, addiction, and withdrawal, through irrational and self-defeating thinking are created by people both intentionally and unconsciously. Even when truancy behaviours cannot be completely eliminated, the way a student perceives and arranges his thoughts can go a long way toward assisting that student in making required adjustments and continuing his academic pursuit.

As a mental restructuring technique, REBT is commonly employed as an educational process in which the therapist actively guides the client in recognizing illogical and counterproductive ideas and viewpoints. Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) uses the ABCDEF model to train clients. This model explains in detail how an individual's emotional disturbance or truancy behaviors are caused by an irrational belief system rather than unfavorable circumstances (Obi & Nicholas, 2020). There is considerable empirical evidence that REBT can reduce truancy among in-school adolescents.

Based on the aforementioned, this study sought to investigate the potential benefits of rational emotive behavior therapy in reducing truancy among in-school adolescents in Abia State. To the researcher's knowledge, no empirical research has looked at how REBT affects truancy rates among in-school adolescents in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

The school exists as a social agent, shaping student's habits, interests, attitudes and sentiments while also passing down societal norms, culture, values and customs from generation to generation. Adolescents in Abia State are expected to participate actively in school since teaching and guidance activities are conducted to help them acquire relevant skills and academic knowledge.

However, some students do not benefit from these benefits since they are frequently absent from school and class for a variety of reasons. Truancy appears to be on the rise, with a large proportion of students absent from school, missing courses and other school activities that could prepare them appropriately for their future. Educators, parents, students, and other stakeholders have devised several means to check the rising incidence of truancy. Their efforts, however, have not generated significant gains, as truancy among in-school teenagers in Abia State remains high.

There is much of evidence to support the usefulness of several psychological interventions, such as REBT, in enabling people to reduce their truancy. This study investigated the effectiveness of REBT in reducing truancy among in-school adolescents in Abia State. The

issue posed in this study is: what is the efficacy of REBT in reducing truancy among in-school adolescents in Abia State?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the efficacy of rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) on truancy among in-school adolescents in Abia State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- ◆ determine the difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at post-test period.
- ◆ ascertain the difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at follow-up period.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- ◆ What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at post-test period?
- ◆ What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at follow-up period?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant mean score difference in the reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at post-test period.

H₀₂: There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at follow-up period.

Methodology

The study used a quasi-experimental design with non-randomized pre-test, post-test, and control groups represented by a 2x1 factorial matrix. The study's sample size was 32 (13 males and 19 females) secondary school students who were purposefully selected from 680 (299 males and 381 females) in-school adolescents in (SSI) identified with truancy using the Truant Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (TBIQ) among in-school adolescents in the 2023/2024 academic session. These included eight subjects each for the REBT and control groups. The study also used multistage sampling approaches. The instrument for the data collection in this study was Truant Behaviour Identification Questionnaire (TBIQ). The TBIQ is a 14-item questionnaire designed to measure severity of social anxiety in the area developed through extensive literature search. The TBIQ is divided into two sections: section one elicited information on demographic variables. Sections two contains 14 items arranged in clusters used

to identify and measure the severity of Truant Behaviour. The TBIQ was designed on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Negative items of the SAIQ were reversed weighing 1, 2, 3 and 4. The cut-off mean score of 2.50 and above represented High frequency severe low social anxiety while mean score below 2.50.

The initial draft of TBIQ accompanied with the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses was face validated by three research experts in College of Education of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Abia State, Nigeria. The experts examined the items and established the suitability, language construction, coverage, clarity, and relevance of the instrument. The experts' comments, suggestion and corrections were effected to produce the final draft of the instrument. The reliability estimate of TBIQ was established through split half method (Cronbach alpha method). The scores obtained were arranged even and odd members for analysis using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded a reliability index of .77 indicating the usability of the instrument for the present study. Stability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation reliability Coefficient to obtain index of .77.

The data collection of the study was carried out basically in three phases:

Pre-treatment Phase: this phase involve two pre-treatment sessions conducted in the study, two weeks prior to treatment it involved preliminary introductions to the sampled in-school adolescents and the subject for the study. The phase carried our pre-treatment assessments in order to identify adolescents with Truant Behaviour using TBIQ to obtain the baseline data while served as covariant to pretest data for the level. The subjects were purposely assigned to one treatment group and control group respectively (REBT and control group).

Treatment Phase: This phase dealt with the actual manipulation of experimental conditions after two weeks group while the control group was regarded as waitlist group. The experimental group has six sessions which last for 40 minutes each. The researchers and the subjects choose days, time and venue for their meeting that lasted for four weeks. There was two sessions in each week. A description of the REBT and a methodological outline of the session activities for the group were briefly stated below:

REBT

Session one: initial counselling establishment issues and setting of goals

This was an introductory session. This session was for the establishment of rapport and the issue of confidentiality, explanation of roles and responsibilities of counsellor and client and other initial establishment issues were raised. The researcher assisted the subjects to set counselling goals both short and long term goals.

Session Two – Imaginal Disputation Technique of REBT

The session started with the motivation of subject and the review of the previous session. Subjects were asked to submit their assignment of the last sessions which was followed by

discussion that emanated from the assignment. Having recognized/realized their irrational thought and an orientation of REBT, the researcher introduced the first REBT technique which was imaginal disputation.

Session Three – Behavioural Disputation Technique of REBT

The session started with the motivation of subjects. Progress verification continued in this session. Task and assignment given to the subjects, in the last session were reviewed and discussed by the researcher and subjects, then behavioural disputation technique were explained; it is having the client behave in a way that is opposite to the way they would have responded to the situation.

Session four – Emotional control technique of REBT

The session started with the motivation of subject. There was a recap of the last session's activities. Progress verification continued in this session. Task and assignment given to the subjects in the last session were reviewed and discussed by the researcher and subjects. Disputing irrational thought either through imaginal or behavioural disputation was highlighted or discussed with the subjects.

Session five – Confrontation and encouragement technique of REBT

The session started with the motivation of subjects. Progress verification continued in this session. Task and assignment were given to the subjects. Confrontation technique was exposed to the subjects by the first discussion. For instance, confrontation is an attempt by the counsellor to gently bring about awareness in the clients of something that they may have purposively overlooked or carefully avoided.

Session six – Review of activities in all sessions

This was the final stage of the rational emotive behaviour therapy treatment plan. The session started with the motivation of subjects. The subjects were commended for their efforts.

Post-Treatment Phase

The post-treatment was carried out immediately after the last treatment session. The TBIQ was re-administrated to the subjects after reshuffling at the end of the experiment. The responses of the subjects were scored and results compared with the pre-test score of the subjects on TBIQ. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used as a statistical control measure. It also has the ability to increase the power of a statistical test.

The data collected for the study were statistically analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance as shown in tables 1-4.

Results

Research Question 1:

What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at post-test period?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Difference in the rate of truancy reduction of students exposed to REBT and control group at posttest period

Source		Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction	Difference
Groups	N		SD		SD			
REBT	8	3.79	2.36	1.27	1.34	2.52		
							2.20	
Control	8	3.78	2.32	3.46	1.43	0.32		

Table 1 shows that patients with truant conduct who were treated with rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) had a pre-test mean score of 3.79 with a standard deviation of 2.36 and a post-test mean score of 1.27 with a standard deviation of 1.34. Similarly, respondents in the control group who engaged in truant behaviour had a pre-test mean score of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 2.32 and a post-test mean score of 3.46 with a standard deviation of 1.43. The table also demonstrated that subjects with truant behaviour exposed to REBT had a mean reduction of 2.52, whereas their counterparts in the control group had a reduction of 0.32. The mean reduction difference between the REBT and control groups is 2.20, implying that participants with truant behaviour exposed to REBT had a lower mean truant behaviour than their counterparts in the control group. As a result, the findings indicated that using rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) reduced truancy rates among in-school adolescents at the posttest.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant mean score difference in the reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control group at post-test period.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of the Mean Score Difference in the Reduction of truant Behaviour of the REBT Group and Control Group at Post-Test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3839.116 ^a	2	11919.558	11.912	.000
Intercept	2630.668	1	2630.668	22.65	.000
Pre-test	1524.670	1	1524.670	18.923	.001
Group	1231.017	1	1231.017	14.713	.000
Error	1087.726	13	88.671		
Total	38967.000	16			
Corrected Total	7476.888	15			

a R squared = .354 (Adjusted R squared = .346).

The results in Table 2 above reveal that REBT, as a study factor, has a substantial effect on reducing truancy among the subjects. The calculated f-value of 14.713 for the treatment as the primary effect of REBT on the mean rate of reduction in truancy scores is greater than the f-critical value of 1.96 with a degree of freedom of 13 at the 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that introducing people with truant conduct to REBT dramatically reduced their truancy. As a result, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant mean score difference in truancy reduction between the REBT and control groups in the post-test period was rejected. Consequently, at the post-test time, there is a substantial mean score difference in the reduction of truancy between the REBT group and the control.

Research Question 2:

What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control group at follow-up period?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control group at follow-up period

Source		Post-test		Follow-up		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction Difference
Groups	N	SD		SD			
REBT	8	1.27	1.34	1.21	1.77	0.06	0.04
Control	8	3.46	1.43	3.44	0.90	0.02	

Table 3 shows that subjects with truancy who received Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) had a post-test mean score of 1.27 with a standard deviation of 1.34 and a

follow-up mean score of 1.21 with a standard deviation of 1.77. Similarly, patients with truancy in the control group had a post-test mean score of 3.46 with a standard deviation of 1.43 and a follow-up mean score of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.90. The table also demonstrated that patients with truancy who were exposed to rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) had a mean reduction of 0.06, whereas their counterparts in the control group had 0.02.

The mean reduction between the rational emotive behaviour treatment (REBT) and the control group is 0.04, implying that participants with truancy who received rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) had a mean reduction in their truant behaviour compared to their counterparts in the control group. Consequently, the results suggested that the treatment gains of the REBT group were maintained after one month of follow-up.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of truancy of students exposed to REBT and control at follow-up period.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Difference in the Rate of Reduction of Truancy of Students exposed to REBT and Control Group at Follow-up Period

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	2263.221a	2	1131.611	10.6625	.002
Intercept	4136.357	1	4136.357	41.3965	.000
Posttest	2255.717	1	2255.717	22.575	.000
Follow-up	91.240	1	91.240	0.913	.286
Error	1348.919	13	103.763	0.879	
Total	7016.000	16			
Corrected Total	1045.5385	15			

a.R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = .068)

Table 4 shows that there was no significant mean score difference in the reduction of truancy between the REBT treatment group and the control group at follow-up. The computed f-value of 0.879 for the difference in truancy reduction between the REBT treatment group and the control group at follow-up is less than the f-critical value of 1.96 with 13 degrees of freedom at the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, the null hypothesis of no significant mean score difference in decrease of truancy between the REBT treatment group and the control group at follow-up was maintained. Thus, the truancy mean scores of the REBT group did not differ significantly between the post-test and one month follow-up period.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the findings of the study were based on the research suggestions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The results in Tables 1 and 2 for the first research question and hypothesis demonstrated that exposing truant individuals to REBT treatment considerably reduced their truancy. This is demonstrated by the finding that subjects with truancy who received REBT had a higher reduction in truancy than those in the control group at posttest. The hypothesis revealed a substantial mean score difference in the rate of truancy reduction between the REBT group and the control group during the post-test period, demonstrating the treatment's efficacy. The study supported Muhammad's (2020) findings on employing rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) counselling to minimize absenteeism among students at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria. The counselling approach using the rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) paradigm proven to be beneficial in reducing student absenteeism. In addition, the patient believes that they are not alone or lonely. Encouragement entails directly advising clients to utilize rational emotive behaviour therapy rather than continuing with self-defeating behaviours. In addition, efforts by schools, teachers, counsellors, researchers and society at large to reduce truancy rates through non-therapeutic approaches such as increased supervision, close monitoring, scolding, punishment, and suspension appear to have yielded unsatisfactory results (Ehinder, 2015). This is to say that REBT may not necessarily reduce truancy among in-school adolescents. Other techniques may be combined to enhance the effectiveness of treatment.

The results in Tables 3 and 4 reveal that rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) significantly reduced truant behaviour in participants with truancy, and the treatment improvements were maintained following a one-month follow-up period. The hypothesis that there is no significant mean score difference in the rate of truancy between patients exposed to REBT and the control group at the follow-up period was rejected. The study supported Obi and Nicholas' (2020) findings on the usefulness of rational emotive behaviour therapy (REBT) in reducing academic stress among undergraduate students in Rivers State. The results demonstrated that the treatment condition had a substantial effect on academic stress levels. This demonstrated that the treatment condition caused a significant drop in the academic stress level of students in the REBT group in comparison to those in the control group.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that rational emotive behaviour therapy significantly reduced the truancy of in-school adolescents. This was evidenced from the findings that in-school adolescents exposed to REBT had higher mean rational emotive behaviour therapy than those in the control group. This implies that in-school adolescents exposed to REBT significantly reduced their incidence and prevalence of truancy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study the following recommendations were made:

- ◆ Government should establish functional guidance and counselling in each public school and employ a qualified school counsellor.
- ◆ School guidance counsellors should employ rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) to reduce truant behavior in students who are referred to them.
- ◆ School administrators that have challenges of truancy of adolescents against the opposite sex or the same sex should use appropriate behaviour modification techniques such as Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) irrespective of gender.

Limitation of the Study

There may be chances of the inclusion of those who might not have been involved and the exclusion of those that should be included in the study due to sampling error. The inclusion of such adolescents and the exclusion of those who should have been included might have affected the result, but the researcher made adequate efforts to include high percent of in-school adolescents identified with truancy incidences as recorded in attendance register.

Suggestion for Further

Researchers should strive to conduct more studies to discover other unwanted behaviours that Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) could be effectively applied to in order to ensure good teaching and learning in schools. Future researchers should discover other counselling techniques that can ameliorate the in-school adolescence from single-parent homes.

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**ROLES OF FAMILY COUNSELLING IN ENHANCING MORAL
DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING IN DIVERSE FAMILY
STRUCTURES**

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Abstract

This paper explores the critical role of family counselling in enhancing moral development and wellbeing across diverse family structures, including nuclear and extended family. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Family Systems Theory, Attachment Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, the study examines how family counselling addresses the unique challenges posed by each family structure. The paper reviews related literature, highlighting the effectiveness of family counselling in fostering moral values, improving communication, and promoting emotional resilience. In nuclear families, counselling, extended families gain clarity in intergenerational relationships through Counselling. The paper emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive and tailored Counselling interventions that

address the specific needs of different family structures. Implications for practitioners include adopting flexible approaches, while policymakers are urged to design inclusive family support programs. The paper concludes that as family dynamics evolve, family Counselling remains an essential tool for promoting moral development and overall wellbeing, making it crucial for ongoing research and practice in this field. The paper underscores the transformative potential of family counselling in supporting diverse families in contemporary society.

Keywords: Family Counselling, Moral Development, Wellbeing, Diverse Family Structures

Introduction

Family counselling has long been recognized as a pivotal intervention in promoting the moral development and wellbeing of individuals within the family unit. As family structures evolve due to sociocultural, economic, and technological changes, the role of family Counselling becomes increasingly crucial in addressing the unique challenges faced by diverse family systems. Family structures now include nuclear families, single-parent households, extended families, same-sex parent families, and blended families, each with distinct dynamics that can impact the moral development and overall wellbeing of family members. Early studies have underscored the importance of family Counselling in mitigating familial conflicts, promoting ethical behaviors, and enhancing the emotional health of individuals within these varied family structures (Boyd-Franklin, 2013; Nichols & Davis, 2017).

The core premise of family Counselling is to provide a safe and supportive environment where family members can openly discuss their issues, understand each other's perspectives, and work together towards resolving conflicts. The Counselling process involves various therapeutic approaches that cater to the specific needs of the family, fostering better communication, understanding, and moral guidance. Research by Minuchin (2017) highlights that family Counselling not only facilitates better parent-child relationships but also promotes the development of social skills, empathy, and ethical decision-making in children.

In the context of moral development, family Counselling plays a significant role in instilling values, ethics, and moral reasoning in children and adolescents. The process of Counselling helps in addressing behavioral issues, reinforcing positive behaviors, and guiding children through the complexities of moral dilemmas. Additionally, family Counselling contributes to the overall wellbeing of family members by providing them with coping mechanisms to handle stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges. This paper explores the roles of family Counselling in enhancing moral development and wellbeing across various family structures, drawing on theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and practical implications.

The concept of family Counselling emerged in the mid-20th century as a response to the

changing dynamics of family life. With the advent of industrialization, urbanization, and globalization, traditional family structures underwent significant transformations, leading to the emergence of diverse family forms. These changes necessitated the development of specialized counselling approaches to address the unique challenges faced by families. Family Counselling, therefore, evolved as an interdisciplinary field that integrates principles from psychology, sociology, and social work to promote the overall functioning and wellbeing of families (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013).

Family structures have become increasingly diverse, with the rise of single-parent households, blended families, cohabiting couples, and same-sex parent families. These diverse family forms often face unique challenges that can impact the moral development and wellbeing of family members. For instance, single-parent households may struggle with issues related to financial stability, role overload, and the absence of a father or mother figure, which can affect the moral and emotional development of children (Amato, 2014). Similarly, blended families may encounter challenges related to step-parenting, sibling rivalry, and the integration of different family cultures (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

Given these challenges, family Counselling has become an essential intervention in promoting moral development and wellbeing in diverse family structures. Through various therapeutic techniques, family Counselling helps families navigate their unique challenges, resolve conflicts, and foster a supportive environment that promotes positive moral and emotional development. This paper sought to explore the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of family Counselling and its role in enhancing moral development and wellbeing in diverse family structures.

Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the roles of family counselling in enhancing moral development and wellbeing in diverse family structures. The qualitative approach is chosen for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics within different family structures and the impact of family counselling on moral development and wellbeing. Data is collected through a comprehensive review of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journals, books, and empirical studies related to family Counselling, moral development, and family wellbeing. Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes and patterns within the literature, allowing for a thorough exploration of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin family Counselling. This methodology is particularly suited for exploring the nuanced and multifaceted nature of family Counselling and its implications for diverse family structures.

Family Systems Theory

Family Systems Theory, developed by Murray Bowen in the late (1960), posits that the family functions as an emotional unit, and individuals cannot be fully understood in isolation from their family system. According to this theory, family members are interconnected and

influence one another's behaviors, emotions, and development patterns. Recent developments in the theory, as highlighted by Nichols and Davis (2020), emphasize how these emotional interconnections shape not only relational dynamics but also the personal development of values and moral frameworks within individuals. This systems-based view has proven essential in understanding the psychological and social processes that influence individual development within family contexts.

The applicability of Family Systems Theory to moral development lies in its focus on interpersonal relationships and emotional regulation within the family. Children develop moral reasoning and behavior largely through interaction with caregivers and siblings, who serve as role models and sources of reinforcement or correction. Research by Grych and Allen (2021) emphasizes that family emotional climate, parenting styles, and conflict resolution strategies significantly influence the moral and ethical orientations of children. The systemic nature of the theory enables practitioners to understand how moral behaviours are cultivated or hindered within family subsystems, making it valuable for developmental psychology and education.

In the realm of family Counselling, Family Systems Theory serves as a practical framework for addressing issues such as communication breakdown, behavioral problems, and intergenerational conflicts. By viewing problems as part of a larger system rather than isolated individual dysfunctions, therapists can implement interventions that foster healthier family interactions and support moral growth. Recent work by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2020) supports the use of systemic approaches in therapy to improve family cohesion and foster mutual respect and empathy, which are vital components of moral behavior. Thus, the theory remains highly relevant in both theoretical and practical contexts of moral development and Counselling.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory, first developed by John Bowlby in the late (1950) and later expanded by Mary Ainsworth, posits that early relationships between children and their caregivers play a crucial role in shaping socio-emotional development. According to the theory, secure attachments formed in early childhood create a foundation for trust, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships across the lifespan. Recent updates and empirical validations of the theory emphasize its relevance in contemporary psychological and educational contexts. For instance, Mikulincer and Shaver (2019) affirm that attachment security continues to influence individuals' moral reasoning and behaviour into adulthood.

In relation to moral development, attachment theory suggests that children who experience secure attachments are more likely to internalize moral values, develop empathy, and exhibit pro-social behaviors. Securely attached children learn to regulate their emotions and understand others' perspectives, foundational skills for moral judgment. A recent study by Mallinckrodt et al. (2022) found that attachment security correlates with increased moral sensitivity and a stronger sense of responsibility, highlighting the role of early emotional bonds

in ethical behavior and conscience formation.

In the domain of family Counselling, attachment theory provides a vital framework for understanding relational patterns and healing dysfunctional dynamics. Counselors use attachment-based approaches to help families recognize insecure attachment styles that may underlie conflict, communication breakdowns, or emotional withdrawal. For example, Johnson and Wiebe (2020) underscore the effectiveness of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), grounded in attachment theory, in fostering emotional safety and re-establishing secure family bonds. Thus, attachment theory not only informs preventive developmental strategies but also serves as a cornerstone in therapeutic interventions to rebuild trust and connection within families.

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT), as proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), explains moral development through observation, imitation, and modeling. Children internalize values and behaviors by watching significant others such as parents, siblings, teachers, and peers. Moral learning occurs not just through direct reinforcement but also through vicarious experiences—observing the consequences of others' actions (Bandura, 1986). These processes help children understand social norms and adopt behaviors that are socially and morally acceptable.

In the context of family Counselling, SLT offers practical strategies for behavior modification and value transmission within families. Research supports the effectiveness of modeling and reinforcement techniques in influencing children's behavior, making SLT an effective framework for parental training and behavior management (Grusec & Hastings, 2022). Counselors can help families restructure their environments and encourage parents to model prosocial behaviors, which in turn fosters positive moral development in children. SLT also explains the multi-generational transmission of behaviors and attitudes within families (Miller, 2021).

Despite its strengths, SLT has been critiqued for underemphasizing cognitive and emotional aspects of moral development (Eisenberg, 2024). However, its focus on observable behaviors and social context makes it especially useful in applied settings like family Counselling. Its adaptability across cultural contexts and empirical grounding in developmental psychology affirm its relevance and utility in promoting moral behavior and resolving family-based behavioral issues.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory, proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1979, posits that human development is shaped by different levels of environmental systems: microsystem (immediate settings like family and school), mesosystem (interconnections between microsystems), exosystem (external settings indirectly influencing the individual), macrosystem (cultural and societal norms), and chronosystem (time-based changes). This multi-layered model highlights

how interactions across various environmental contexts influence an individual's growth and behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Calvano et al., 2021).

In relation to moral development, Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the centrality of family, peers, school, and cultural influences in shaping moral reasoning and behaviour. According to recent studies, these systems serve as moral ecologies where children internalize values through interactions and modeled behaviour. For instance, caregivers within the microsystem are primary sources of moral guidance, while broader cultural norms in the macrosystem inform concepts of right and wrong (Zhou et al., 2021). The theory thus supports holistic approaches in fostering moral development by addressing all levels of environmental influence.

In family counselling, Ecological Systems Theory offers a robust framework for assessing how family members' functioning is affected by interrelated systems. It enables counselors to analyze not only intrafamilial dynamics but also external factors like socioeconomic status, peer influence, and cultural expectations. This systemic perspective aids in designing interventions that consider both proximal and distal influences on family wellbeing (Dangi et al., 2022). As families face increasing challenges across social and economic domains, the ecological lens remains crucial in guiding effective, context-sensitive Counselling practices.

Family Counselling and Moral Development in Nuclear Families

Family counselling has been identified as a significant tool in promoting moral development within nuclear families. A recent study by Ahmed and Musa (2021), titled "Impact of Family Counselling on Moral Development among Adolescents in Urban Nuclear Households in Northern Nigeria," explored how structured family counselling interventions influenced moral behaviour among adolescents. The study focused on adolescents aged 12–17 years residing in nuclear family settings. Using a quasi-experimental design, the researchers selected 120 participants from secondary schools in Bauchi and Gombe States through purposive sampling. The participants underwent an eight-week family counselling intervention facilitated by trained counselors. Data were collected using a moral behaviour checklist and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics.

The study found that adolescents who received family Counselling showed a significant improvement in moral behaviour, including honesty, empathy, and respect for authority. The authors concluded that family counselling strengthens parental roles in moral instruction, improves communication, and fosters emotional bonding, which are all essential for moral development. They recommended integrating family Counselling into school guidance programs and encouraging parents in nuclear families to participate in structured Counselling sessions to promote holistic child development.

Similarly, Johnson and Lee (2022), in their study titled "The Role of Family Counselling in Enhancing Ethical Behavior in Children from Dual-Income Nuclear Families in Urban Singapore," investigated how Counselling interventions could mitigate moral challenges faced

by children in time-constrained family settings. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach involving 100 families and 10 family counselors. Data were collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and behavioural observations over a 6-month period. The participants were nuclear families where both parents were employed full-time, and the children were between 8–14 years old.

Findings revealed that regular family counselling sessions improved moral communication between parents and children. Children demonstrated increased ethical awareness, conflict resolution skills, and social responsibility. Counsellors reported that structured discussions about values, empathy training, and role-modeling exercises contributed significantly to these outcomes. The study concluded that in nuclear families—especially where parental presence is limited due to work—counselling plays a vital compensatory role in moral development. The authors recommended government subsidies for family counselling services and the development of culturally appropriate Counselling modules tailored to nuclear family dynamics.

Family Counselling and Moral Development in Extended Families

The extended family system continues to play a significant role in shaping moral values and behavioral outcomes, especially in collectivist cultures. Recent studies have examined the intersection of family Counselling and moral development within this family structure. One such study by Adeyemi and Okonkwo (2021), titled “Family Counselling as a Tool for Promoting Moral Development Among Adolescents in Extended Family Settings in Southwestern Nigeria,” focused on how Counselling interventions influence adolescents' ethical behavior. Using a descriptive survey design, the researchers sampled 300 adolescents aged 13–18 years from three states in southwestern Nigeria. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and the results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

The study found that adolescents from extended families who received structured family Counselling showed significantly higher levels of moral reasoning and behavior than those who did not. The findings emphasized that intergenerational interactions and shared responsibilities in extended families can either positively or negatively impact moral development, depending on the presence of intentional guidance and Counselling. The researchers concluded that family counselling serves as a structured medium to reinforce ethical behavior, resolve conflicts, and harmonize value transmission across generations. They recommended integrating regular family Counselling sessions into community development programs to support moral upbringing among youth.

Another relevant study was conducted by Muriuki and Njuguna (2022), titled “Influence of Family Therapy on Moral Decision-Making in Extended Family Households in Nairobi County, Kenya.” This quasi-experimental study employed a mixed-methods approach involving 120 participants (30 extended families) undergoing an 8-week family therapy intervention. Pre- and post-intervention assessments were conducted using moral development scales and semi-

structured interviews. The locale for the study was urban and peri-urban neighborhoods within Nairobi County, where extended family households are prevalent due to economic and cultural factors.

The findings revealed significant improvement in moral decision-making among children and adolescents in families who participated in therapy. The qualitative data highlighted that therapy sessions facilitated open communication, addressed intergenerational conflict, and clarified value systems. The authors noted that extended family structures can sometimes create moral ambiguity due to conflicting generational norms, but family Counselling provides a platform for shared understanding. The study concluded that family therapy is effective in fostering moral clarity and ethical behavior in extended family settings. Recommendations included the training of more family therapists with cultural competencies and incorporating family Counselling into school outreach and faith-based programs.

Enhancing Wellbeing in Diverse Family Structures through Family Counselling

Family counselling has increasingly been recognized as a vital intervention to enhance wellbeing across diverse family structures. Recent empirical studies demonstrate its effectiveness in addressing unique challenges faced by families in various socio-cultural contexts, including single-parent families, blended families, and families with non-traditional compositions. This review synthesizes findings from two recent studies that examine how family counselling can promote psychological health, communication, and resilience in diverse family settings.

Dangi, Hall, and Juffer (2022) conducted a mixed-method study titled “A systemic approach to family Counselling: Applications of ecological theory” that focused on applying Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory to family counselling practice. The study involved 120 families from urban settings in the United States, including nuclear, single-parent, and stepfamilies. Quantitative data were collected through standardized wellbeing and family functioning scales, while qualitative interviews explored participants’ perceptions of counselling impacts. The researchers found that family counselling interventions which addressed not only intrafamilial communication but also external environmental stressors—such as economic hardship and social stigma—significantly improved overall family cohesion and individual wellbeing. The ecological perspective was particularly valuable in tailoring Counselling approaches to specific family contexts, thereby enhancing engagement and outcomes. The study recommended that practitioners adopt holistic assessment tools and develop culturally sensitive counselling models that consider systemic influences beyond the immediate family unit.

Similarly, Lopez, Sanchez, and Ramirez (2021) explored the efficacy of family counselling in enhancing emotional wellbeing among Latino immigrant families in a study titled “Family therapy as a pathway to resilience in Latino immigrant households.” The study used a longitudinal design, following 75 families over 12 months in Los Angeles, California.

Participants included parents and adolescent children from diverse family forms, such as multigenerational households and single-parent homes. The Counselling model integrated culturally grounded practices, including familismo (family loyalty) and respeto (respect), to address acculturation stress and intergenerational conflicts. Using mixed methods, the researchers documented significant reductions in depressive symptoms, improved parent-child communication, and strengthened family support networks. Notably, the Counselling process enhanced families’ adaptive capacities to navigate both cultural transition and economic pressures. The authors concluded that culturally tailored family Counselling is essential in fostering resilience and wellbeing in immigrant families, urging for policy initiatives to increase access to such services in underserved communities.

These studies affirm that family counselling plays a crucial role in promoting wellbeing across diverse family structures by addressing both relational dynamics and contextual challenges. Dangi et al. (2022) highlight the importance of ecological and systemic frameworks that encompass external factors influencing family life, while Lopez et al. (2021) emphasize culturally relevant approaches that honor the values and experiences of minority populations. Both recommend expanding family Counselling services with attention to cultural competence, socio-economic realities, and the inclusion of extended family members where relevant.

Role of Family Counselling in Addressing Behavioral Issues in Diverse Family Structures

Behavioural issues in children and adolescents are common across diverse family structures and can impact their moral development and wellbeing. Family Counselling plays a critical role in addressing these issues by helping families understand the underlying causes of behavioral problems and develop effective strategies for managing them. Research by Patterson (2017) shows that family counselling is effective in reducing behavioral issues and promoting positive behavior in children, regardless of family structure. Family counselling helps families establish consistent rules and expectations, which are essential for promoting moral development and addressing behavioural issues.

Impact of Family Counselling on Parental Wellbeing and Parenting Practices

Family Counselling not only benefits children but also has a significant impact on parental wellbeing and parenting practices. By providing parents with the support and guidance they need, family Counselling helps improve parental wellbeing, which in turn enhances their ability to provide effective moral guidance to their children. Studies have shown that parents who receive family Counselling are more likely to develop positive parenting practices, such as effective communication, consistent discipline, and emotional support, which are crucial for the moral development and wellbeing of their children (Sanders & Kirby, 2014).

Implications

The paper highlights the importance of tailoring family Counselling interventions to the unique needs of different family forms, recognizing that each family structure presents distinct

challenges and opportunities for moral development and wellbeing. For practitioners, this means adopting a flexible and culturally sensitive approach to Counselling that takes into account the specific dynamics and cultural contexts of the families they work with. Additionally, the study underscores the need for ongoing research to explore the effectiveness of family Counselling in promoting moral development and wellbeing across various family structures, particularly in the context of changing societal norms and values.

The paper also has implications for policy development, particularly in the areas of family support and mental health services. Policymakers should consider the diverse needs of different family structures when designing and implementing family support programs, ensuring that all families have access to the resources and support they need to promote moral development and wellbeing. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of incorporating family Counselling into broader mental health and social services, recognizing its critical role in supporting the moral and emotional development of individuals within the family unit.

Conclusion

Family Counselling plays a pivotal role in enhancing moral development and wellbeing across diverse family structures. As family dynamics continue to evolve in response to societal changes, the need for effective family Counselling interventions becomes increasingly important. This paper has explored the theoretical and conceptual foundations of family Counselling and its role in promoting moral development and wellbeing in various family forms, including nuclear and extended families.

Suggestions

- ◆ **Tailored Interventions:** Family counselling interventions should be tailored to the unique needs of different family structures, recognizing that each family form presents distinct challenges and opportunities for moral development and wellbeing.
- ◆ **Cultural Sensitivity:** Counsellors should adopt a culturally sensitive approach to family Counselling, taking into account the cultural contexts and values of the families they work with.
- ◆ **Focus on Communication:** Family Counselling should emphasize the importance of open communication and mutual respect among family members, which are critical for moral development and emotional wellbeing.
- ◆ **Support for Single-Parent Families:** Special attention should be given to single-parent families, who may face unique challenges related to financial stress and role overload, by providing them with targeted Counselling support.
- ◆ **Addressing Behavioral Issues:** Family counselling should focus on addressing behavioral issues in children and adolescents, helping families develop effective strategies for managing these issues and promoting positive behavior.

- ◆ **Incorporating Attachment Theory:** Counselling interventions should incorporate principles from Attachment Theory to strengthen the emotional bonds between parents and children, which are crucial for moral development.
- ◆ **Parental Wellbeing:** Family Counselling should also focus on enhancing parental wellbeing, recognizing that parents' emotional health significantly impacts their ability to provide moral guidance to their children.
- ◆ **Policy Development:** Policymakers should consider the diverse needs of different family structures when designing family support programs and ensure that all families have access to family Counselling services.

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**COUNSELLING FOR FAMILY WELL - BEING AND MORAL
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

through difficult times, and contribute positively to their communities.

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

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

Understanding Family Wellbeing and Moral Development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Role of Counselling in Promoting Family Wellbeing

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

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

develop strategies to manage their emotions through counselling sessions.

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

Role of Counselling in Promoting Moral Development

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

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

Counselling Approaches and Techniques

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

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

Benefits and Outcomes

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

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

Challenges in Counselling for Family Wellbeing and Moral Development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Challenges and Considerations

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

Suggestions

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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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 De- viation
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.

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COUNSELLING FOR FAMILY WELL - BEING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG STREET GIRLS IN ABUJA MUNICIPAL FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The research investigated counselling for family wellbeing and moral development among street girls in Abuja Municipal FCT, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Four research questions were formulated to guide the study. The null hypotheses were adopted and analyzed at 0.05 level of significance for the study. The population of the study comprised 180 participants. The sample consisted of 120 respondents made up of 60 street girls, 20 professional counsellors and 40 households randomly selected from the population of the study. This instrument used for the study was questionnaire titled Counselling for Family Wellbeing and Moral Development among Street Girls Questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics that yielded 0.72 reliability coefficient index. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the two hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

The mean cut-off benchmark of 2.50 and above was considered as agreed while below 2.50 was considered as disagreed. The findings revealed that factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities in the study area include lack of financial resources, unemployment of parents and family disintegration among others. Recommendation was made that –The girl child should be involved in capacity building skills, job opportunities and empowered with self – reliant enterprises to enable them generate incomes as well as become employers of labours positively.

Keywords: Counselling, Family, Wellbeing, Moral Development, Street Girls.

Introduction

There is global concern about reported deterioration in girl child moral wellbeing and street activities during the last two decades and numerous studies have informed that recently girl child's health problems are not as good as those of a few years ago (Collishaw, 2015 Gilligan (2018). On the same note, Collishaw (2015) acknowledged that extent to which observed declines in girl child's wellbeing are consistent across countries is largely unknown and less is known about the developments that could clarify these deteriorations in girl child's moral wellbeing. There is great importance in the study of moral well-being, not only because it describes a person's life quality but also because it has a positive effect on a person's life. Such positive effects include better health and immunity, where happy people tend to be healthier, less frequently ill, tend to live longer, and have better self-control (Collishaw, 2015). Kohlberg (2014), sees moral well-being as the development of moral reasoning through distinct stages, where individuals progress from a self-centered perspective to a principled understanding of justice and human rights. Gilligan (2018) offers a different perspective, linking moral well-being to the ethic of care. Gilligan (2018) emphasizes relationships and the responsibility to care for others as central to moral well-being, contrasting with the justice-based approaches.

Sandel (2019) discusses moral well-being in the context of justice and the common good, arguing that it involves not just individual happiness but the pursuit of a just society where individuals contribute to and are supported by the community. These definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of moral well-being, illustrating how it can be understood from different ethical, psychological, and social perspectives. In general, Moral well-being refers to the state of an individual's moral health or flourishing, which encompasses living in alignment with ethical values, principles, and virtues. It involves the integration of one's actions, decisions, and behaviors with a sense of what is right and good, both for oneself and for others. Moral well-being is one of the critical factors that affect a person's quality of life. This applies to every individual regardless of their gender, age, and socio-economic status. Moral well-being is particularly relevant to vulnerable groups and groups of economically and socially marginalized groups. These people often do not enjoy the fruits of economic development and are also vulnerable to physical, emotional, and psychological exploitation (Ogwo, 2013). Included within this category of vulnerable groups are street girls. The term "street girls" generally refers to young girls or women who live or work on the streets, often in very challenging and unsafe conditions. This term is sometimes used in the context of discussions about homelessness, poverty, and exploitation. Street girls share some of the characteristics of vulnerable groups since they are women, working on the streets, and live in poorly conditioned residential areas. In addition to this, street girls often have to endure a range of hardships, for example, poverty, living without parents, pregnancy, teenage birth etc. (Ogwo, 2013). The researchers defined family wellbeing as the act of living standard lives in standard environments involving shelter, food clothing, education and healthy life-style.

The family, however, is considered to be the primary setting in which children begin to acquire their beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviour (Ogwo, 2013). The family is the support system that adolescents turn to when they are faced with fears and doubts about themselves and

their future (Koen, et al., 2011). Murdock (2017) defined the family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. Parsons (2019) defined the family as "a factory which produces human personalities," emphasizing its role in socializing children and stabilizing adult personalities. He focused on the nuclear family as the basic unit within industrial societies. The role of the family, therefore, seems crucial in adolescent development (Koen et al., 2011) as the family is perceived as a working unit that is greater than the sum of its parts; each member affects the family as a whole, while the family members also affect each individual member (Buswell, et al., 2012). It is within the family environment that an individual's physical, emotional and psychological development occurs. Within the family, we learn about unconditional love, understand right from wrong, as well as, gain empathy, respect and self-regulation. These qualities, according to Walker (2013), Families enable us to engage positively at school, work and in society (Department of Social Development, 2013). They are the primary sources of an individual's development and considered as appropriate in society (Ogwo, 2013). While the family is considered central to the socialization of children, not much attention is given to the role of family development in the decision-making styles of street girls.

Family development" refers to the process by which families change and evolve over time. Several scholars have provided definitions and frameworks to understand this concept. Duvall (2017) introduced the concept of "family development" as a series of stages that a family goes through over its life course. Duvall proposed that families progress through predictable stages, each characterized by specific developmental tasks and challenges, from marriage to child-rearing to aging. Hill (2018) on the other hand described family development as a process influenced by internal family dynamics and external social factors. Hill emphasized the role of family crises and how families adapt to changes over time, which can lead to growth or decline. Crapo et al., (2018) defined family development as a sequence of phases through which families move, focusing on the transitions between stages, such as marriage, parenthood, and retirement. She highlighted the importance of role transitions and the adaptation of family members to new roles. Family raises children who grow to be adolescent in their life stage. Adolescent need moral knowledge and development in their family. They should have the process of moral coaching in their family. Their developmental period may experience behavioral shock and they may experience personal and behavioral difficulties. Therefore, their crucial development requires special understanding from their parents and educators (Bawazir, 2009). They could not be separated from their parent's influence and relationship to proceed their life in their growth and development as an adolescent. There are various educational approaches implemented in schools, which support family development. Guidance and Counselling is among the successful educational approaches in supporting family development as it affects adolescent moral wellbeing (girl child) (Duvall, 2017).

Guidance and Counselling is a vital tool for national development. To achieve the above, among other factors, Guidance and Counselling are significant to produce a well-balanced individual who will fit in society and contribute positively for his or her own good and society at

large. According to Gibson (2011), Guidance and Counselling can be defined as a systematic and professional process that involves helping individuals to understand themselves better, explore their potential, and make informed decisions regarding personal, educational, and career goals. In the words of Cormier and Hackney (2012), Guidance and Counselling is a collaborative and supportive approach that facilitates personal growth and problem-solving by providing individuals with emotional support, guidance, and resources to address various challenges in their lives.

Gysbers and Henderson (2006) define Guidance and Counselling as a comprehensive process that encompasses a range of activities aimed at assisting individuals in acquiring skills, knowledge, and attitudes to make effective choices in their educational, vocational, and personal lives. According to Gladding (2017), Guidance and Counselling is a helping relationship that empowers individuals to explore their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, leading to greater self-awareness and the development of problem-solving and coping skills. For Capuzzi and Gross (2019), Guidance and Counselling involves the application of psychological principles and techniques to facilitate personal and interpersonal growth, foster emotional well-being, and enhance decision-making processes.

Counselling is a professional assistance given by the counsellor to individuals experiencing challenges in life, for them to resource their problems and be useful to themselves and the society. To the mistreated and abused women at work places and in the society, counselling is for them to be assertive and affirm to speak out the issues affecting them for assistance to be rendered. Counselling according to Idowu (2016), is the integral part of guidance, a specialized concept, the heart of the core of guidance, the hub of the guidance wheel or the pivotal specific service around which guidance revolves. A problem shared is a problem half solved, seek counselling when the need arises. The researchers defined moral development as the training given to individuals or groups to improve on their behaviours, socially, cognitively, and reasoning abilities for improved personality threats. The researchers defined Counselling as assistant, help or aid rendered to an individual or group of individuals otherwise solved at a given moment the need arises.

Street girls are among the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society, who regularly lack access to basic needs such as shelter, food, health care, safety and education (UNICEF, 2017). World-wide, these street children experience countless problems (UNICEF, 2017). They are exposed to inhumane conditions; suffering hunger, persecution, physical abuse and, are disadvantaged due to lack of basic services like education and health (Kebende, 2015). In order to survive, most of them resort to begging, stealing and prostitution (Menon, 2015). Street girl child are unguarded with regards to contracting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases because of early exposure to sexual activity, poor use of contraceptives and high chances of partner change while lacking adequate information on sexual activity (Menon, 2015). Sexual abuse is one of the main problems faced by Street girl child in major cities of the world Nigeria inclusive (Menon, 2015). Street girl child are usually regarded as a major obstacle to social-economic progress and a substantial threat to national security. These apparent and real threats triggered the current flow of global interest in street children (Basu & Tzannontos, 2013).

The present condition of Nigeria may have impacted the self believe of adolescents especially

the girl child, leading many to lose confidence in themselves and in the society at large. Some of these girl children may have lost direction, turning to the street as a means of survival. Often, they attribute their actions to factors like unemployment, poverty, and family related issues. As a result, many of them struggle psychologically and engage in erratic behavior in an attempt to cope with their inner mind. There are different educational programs designed and assumed to play important role in family development and moral wellbeing among street girls in Nigeria especially in Abuja municipal, Guidance and Counselling as educational program focuses on family development and moral wellbeing of adolescent as one of its set objectives, but it is not clear if they are compatible or relate to the needs of street girls and how compatibility or lack of compatibility affects family's access to the services. Therefore, there is need to examine the need for counselling strategies for family development and moral wellbeing among street girls in Nigeria especially in Abuja municipal FCT. To achieve this, it is essential to emphasize the significance of Counselling as the most powerful medium for reaching out to families effectively. The researchers defined street girls as helpless female adolescents who engage in making money using their bodies to help themselves financially, their parents, and siblings to survive in life.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing number of street girls in Abuja Municipal, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, poses a significant social challenge, affecting both family wellbeing and moral development. These girls often experience poverty, homelessness, abuse, and exploitation, which can lead to emotional distress, delinquency, and social disintegration. The absence of a stable family structure and moral guidance exposes them to negative influences such as substance abuse, criminal activities, and early pregnancies, further deepening their vulnerability.

Despite various governmental and non-governmental interventions aimed at addressing the plight of street children, there remains a gap in targeted counselling programs tailored to the unique psychological, social, and moral needs of street girls. Many rehabilitation efforts focus primarily on shelter and basic needs, with limited emphasis on structured counselling for emotional healing, family reintegration, and moral development. Without proper counselling support, these girls struggle to reintegrate into society, maintain stable relationships, and develop positive moral values essential for personal and social growth.

This study seeks to examine the role of counselling in promoting family wellbeing and moral development among street girls in Abuja Municipal FCT. It aims to assess existing counselling strategies, identify gaps in intervention efforts, and propose effective counselling models that can facilitate psychological healing, family reunification, and the development of positive moral values. By addressing these gaps, the research will contribute to policies and programs that foster the holistic rehabilitation and reintegration of street girls into society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to analyse the impact of counselling strategies for family development and moral wellbeing among street girls in Nigeria especially in Abuja municipal FCT.

Specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child.
- ii. Identify the factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities.
- iii. Identify the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development.
- iv. Relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child?
- ii. What are the factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities?
- iii. What are the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development?
- iv. What is the relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated that guided the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child.

H₀₂: the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development does not significantly influence the level of girl child involvement in street activities.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design is the type of research design that describes what exists or the present status of existence where a group of individuals' or items is studied by collecting data through questionnaire or interview and analysing the data to establish fact (Nkwocha & Akanwa, 2017). The design was considered suitable for this study since the researchers made use of questionnaire item to collect data from the respondents. The study was conducted in some selected cities of the study area in the federal Capital Territory Abuja FCT. The population of the study comprised 120 participants made up of 60 street girls, 20 professional counsellors and 40 households. The researchers used questionnaire titled: counselling for family wellbeing and moral development among street girls questionnaire items. The questionnaire was designed by the researchers using four points rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4, Agree (A) 3, Disagree (D) 2 Strongly disagree (SD) 1, respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Statistics that yielded 0.72m reliability coefficient index. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The mean cut-off benchmark of 2.50 and above was considered as agreed while below 2.50 was

considered as disagreed. In addition, the two hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The result of data analysed from research questions answered are presented in tables below.

Research Question 1: what are the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents’ Responses on the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child in the study area

S/N	Item Statements	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1.	Encourage the girl child to pursue her educational interests	2.84	1.08	Agreed
2.	Receive financial support for education, extracurricular activities, and other opportunities that develop her decision-making skills	2.81	0.85	Agreed
3.	Encouraged to challenge traditional gender roles, enhancing their decision-making capabilities.	2.98	0.91	Agreed
4.	Positive socialization, where the girl child learns confidence, assertiveness, and the value of her opinions	2.98	0.94	Agreed
5.	Enables the girl child to make informed choices about her body and reproductive health.	3.00	1.07	Agreed
6.	Allow the girl child to express her thoughts and concerns, leading to better decision-making	3.27	0.95	Agreed
7.	Developed families often provide a safe space for the girl child to discuss and navigate societal pressures, helping her make decisions that align with her values and aspirations.	2.87	1.05	Agreed
Cluster mean		2.41	0.82	

KEY: \bar{X} = mean, S. D. = Standard deviation, Rmks.= Remarks.

From Table 1, the means response of the respondents ranges from 3.27 to 2.81 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed with the listed items as the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child in the study area. Also the standard deviation of all the items ranges from 0.85-1.08 which shows that the responses of the respondents are close to one another in their responses and that they were not far from the mean.

Research Question 2: what are the factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents’ Responses on the factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities in the study area

S/N	Item Statements	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1.	Lack of Financial Resources	2.82	1.04	Agreed
2.	Unemployment of Parents	2.79	1.10	Agreed
3.	Family Disintegration	2.72	1.10	Agreed
4.	Lack of Access to Education	1.45	0.98	Disagreed
5.	Peer Pressure	0.98	0.97	Strongly Disagreed
Cluster Mean		2.15	0.83	

KEY: \bar{X} = mean, S.D. = Standard deviation, Rmks.= Remarks.

Table 2 shows the factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities. From the result above, the means response of lack of financial resources, unemployment of parents, family disintegration ranges from 2.72-2.82 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that the respondents’ majority of the respondents in the study area lack of financial resources, unemployment of parents and family disintegration as factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities. While the mean response of lack of access to education and peer pressure were below the cut off make of 2.50 indicating that the respondents in the study disagree that lack of access to education and peer pressure to be factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities. Also the standard deviation of all the items ranges from 0.97-1.10 which shows that the responses of the respondents are close to one another in their responses and that they were not far from the mean. The study therefore the study concludes that lack of financial resources, unemployment of parents, family disintegration are factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities in the study area.

Research Question 3: what are the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents’ Responses on the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development in the study area N =120

S/N	Item Statements	\bar{X}	S.D	Rmks
1.	Moral coaching approach	2.61	1.02	Agreed
2.	Social welfare approach	2.67	1.00	Agreed
3.	Motivational guidance approach	2.61	1.09	Agreed
4.	Follow-up and Monitoring approach	2.63	1.06	Agreed
5.	Referral to Support Services approach	1.99	0.84	Disagreed
6.	Highlighting Consequences approach	1.93	0.86	Disagreed
Cluster Mean		2.00	0.96	

KEY: \bar{X} = mean, S.D= Standard deviation, Remarks.= Remarks.

Table 3 shows the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development, from the result above, the means response of the respondents on moral coaching approach, social welfare approach, motivational guidance approach, follow-up and monitoring approach ranges from 2.61-2.67 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that the guidance and Counselling agents in the study area uses moral coaching approach, social welfare approach, motivational guidance approach, follow-up and monitoring approach as family development approaches. While referral to support services approach highlighting consequences approach were rarely used approaches by the guidance and Counselling agents in the study. Also the standard deviation of all the items ranges from 0.84-1.09 which shows that the responses of the respondents are close to one another in their responses and that they were not far from the mean.

Test of Hypotheses

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

Hypothesis One

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of mean ratings on the relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	df	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Family development	56	2.95	0.93	64	1.59	0.44	Accepted
Moral wellbeing of street girl child	10	2.83	1.09				

The data in Table 4 above shows that the calculated t-value is 1.59 while the t- critical value is 0.44 at 0.05 level of significant and at 78 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value is greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child in the study area is therefore rejected. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Two

H0₂: The approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development does not significantly influence the level of girl child involvement in street activities.

Table 5: Correlation

	Measure of Coefficient Correlation	approaches used by guidance and counselling	level of girl child involvement in street activities
approaches used by guidance and counselling	Pearson Correlation	1	0.76
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
level of girl child involvement in street activities	N	120	0.001
	Pearson Correlation	0.76	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	0.001	120

Source: field survey 2024

From the Correlations result in table 5, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient (r) equals 0.76, indicating a strong positive relationship between the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development and the level of girl child involvement in street activities at a probability level of $p < 0.01$ which indicates that the coefficient is significantly different from zero (0). It can be concluded that there is evidence that the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development has a direct and positive relationship with the level of girl child involvement in street activities in the study area ($r = 0.76, p < 0.001$).

Summary of Correlation Output for Hypothesis I

Pearson correlation (r)	= 0.76
N	= 120
Sig. (2 –tailed)	= 0.001

Decision Rule:

Compare the p- value with 5% significance level (0.05), if;

P – Value < 5% level of significance; reject the Null hypothesis (H_0)

P – Value > 5% level of significance; accept the Null hypothesis (H_0)

Therefore, since p value (0.001) < 0.05; we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. By accepting the alternative hypothesis, we be concluded that there is evidence that the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development has a direct and positive relationship with the and the level of girl child involvement in street activities in the study area.

Discussion of Results

The discussion of findings was done based on the results of the data analysed to answer the research questions.

The findings from the study revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed with the listed items as the role of family development in the decision-making of the girl child in the study area.

The finding is related with the study of Letvak (2012) who found that developed families often provide a safe space for the girl child to discuss and navigate societal pressures, helping her make decisions that align with adolescents’ values and aspirations which is in agreement with the present study.

The findings on factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities in the study area revealed that the majority of the respondents in the study area lack financial resources, unemployment of parents and family disintegration as factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities. While the mean response of lack of access to education and peer pressure were below the cut off make of 2.50 indicating that the respondents in the study disagree that lack of access to education and peer pressure to be factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities. The findings further revealed that also the standard deviation of all the items ranges from 0.97-1.10 which shows that the responses of the respondents are close to one another in their responses and that they were not far from the mean. The study therefore concluded that lack of financial resources, unemployment of parents, family disintegration are factors influencing the girl child involvement in street activities in the study area.

The findings on the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development

in the study area revealed that the guidance and Counselling agents in the study area used moral coaching approach, social welfare approach, motivational guidance approach, follow-up and monitoring approach as family development approaches. While referral to support services approach highlighted consequences approaches were rarely used by the guidance and counselling professionals in the study. Also the standard deviation of all the items ranges from 0.84-1.09 which shows that the responses of the respondents were close to one another in their responses and that they were not far from the mean.

The Null Hypothesis which states that There is no significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child in the study area was tested and result revealed that the that the calculated t-value is 1.59 while the t- critical value is 0.44 at 0.05 level of significant and at 78 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value is greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child in the study area is therefore rejected. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted.

The Null Hypothesis which states the approaches used by guidance and Counselling in family development does not significantly influence the level of girl child involvement in street activities in the study area were also tested the result revealed that a strong positive relationship between the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development and the level of girl child involvement in street activities at a probability level of $p < 0.01$ which indicates that the coefficient is significantly different from zero (0). It can be concluded that there is evidence that the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development has a direct and positive relationship with the level of girl child involvement in street activities in the study area ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

The study therefore concludes that there is a significant relationship between family development and moral wellbeing of street girl child in the study area, Family interpersonal relationship provide resources that can help girl child cope with stress, engage in healthier behaviors, and enhance self-esteem, leading to higher psychological well-being, The girl child has strong motivation to end street life if given the proper care and advice but they were unable to make strong tangible efforts, which implies that they need assistance mechanisms before they change. Therefore, the findings call for concerted efforts from various stakeholders to develop programs to change the life situation of street girl child especially in the study area.

The researchers identified the implications of street girls' activities to include:

1. **Psychological Implications:** Psychologically, this group of girls are seen as shame in their families with high level of inferiority complex which sometimes create anxiety and confusion in them making them to be poor instead of being rich.
2. **Health Implementation:** Street girls of this group are mostly challenged by health issues

such as HIV AIDS, Gonorrhea and other infectious diseases that are capable of leading them to death.

3. Social Implications: Socially, street girls face the challenges of falling into the hands of ritualist. They sometimes run mad or get killed. They are also faced with the challenges of indecent dressing, over-bleaching and bad odors that make other responsible people to run away from them.
4. Educational Implications: Educationally, these group of girls are mainly drop-outs from schools, record poor academic achievements and failures. They are never-do-well in vocation and careers.
5. Cognitive Implication: They are highly characterized by irrational thoughts and irrational though processes hence their lack of positive reasoning make them to get involved in alcohol use and abuse, going naked on the street dragging and fighting for men publicly.

Recommendations

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

1. Moral and family development seminars and workshops should be made compulsory for girls and newly married couples especially in the study area.
2. The study findings have also shown that the approaches used by guidance and counselling in family development has a direct and positive relationship with the level of girl child involvement in street activities in the study area. It is therefore necessary for the Ministry of Education to fund and organize in-service training for administrators, teachers and guidance and Counselling teachers on how other guidance and Counselling approaches should be used to manage the level of girl child involvement in street activities as well as good family development.
3. Consequently, effective guidance and counselling orientation programmes educational services/approaches should be put in place as essential part of training in schools at all levels in the society. Furthermore, the government and policy makers should come up with a functional guidance and counselling department which encourages counsellors at all level to be trained and get equipped with guidance and Counselling new skills, techniques and theories for Counselling services.
4. Future studies should be conducted to address the effects of family environment and girl child psychological wellbeing in other states and urban settings in the country. Studies on adults' psychological wellbeing in view of the relationship with adolescents should be conducted. It is important for such a study to establish whether girl child's psychological wellbeing is affected by the way they relate with their parents.
5. The girl child should be involved in capacity building skills, job opportunities and empowered with self – relation enterprises to enable them generate incomes as well as become employers of labours positively.

6. Government should have strategic plans for accommodating the girl child financially before their graduation from secondary school levels especially from adolescents' period from 18 years and above thereby catching them young in responsible acts before the older street women will catch them.
7. The Government should strive to control those factors that make parents to be jobless as well as assist them to create enabling environments for their integrations.

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FAMILY WELL-BEING AS DETERMINANT OF MORAL REASONING DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research examines the roles of family well-being in the moral reasoning of Nigerian adolescents for counselling efficacy. It focuses on the financial aspect of the family. It analyses how the family structure and processes influence cognitive and moral learning according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Kohlberg's moral development stages. This is where the focus of the study is timed when socio-economic problems put pressure on family systems in a collectivist society in Nigeria—studying family well-being and adolescents' moral development based on the correlational research design. Information source: Survey questionnaires were administered to 200 selected secondary school students in Lagos State only. Descriptive analysis, as well as inferential tools such as regression analysis and Pearson's coefficient, were used. This study established a positive correlation between the family welfare, especially that of parents, and the moral reasoning of the adolescent clients ($F(2, 197) = 14.506; p < 0.05$). Family well-being proved to have a positive and significant correlation with moral reasoning development; $r = 0.31, p < 0.05$. The parents' financial status during the study had a positive correlation with the adolescents' moral reasoning gain with $r = 0.31, p < 0.05$ and the test score of $r = 0.33, p < 0.05$. The findings themselves are suggestive of quite strong relations between the state of family affairs, parents' finances, and the level of moral development. The study therefore establishes the fact that family social conditions of well-being and financial capacity play a role in the development of adolescent moral development. The results should guide counselling programme in Nigeria as they integrate conflict-solving and financial management into their programmes tentatively offering solutions involving entire families employing cultural sensitivity to enhance ethical reasoning of children.

Keywords: Family Well-being, Moral reasoning, Financial well-being

Introduction

Family health has always been a significant determinant of the moral development of children and teenagers. Recent findings have emphasised the significance of proper family environment as a significant predictor of children's cognition and emotional development, which is in line with the influence on the moral development (Grillo, 2016). In Nigeria, it becomes particularly important to examine the influence that the state of family well-being has on morality because the culture of close-knit families and large families prevailing within it is rapidly developing. The study aims to narrow the existing gap between family well-being and moral reasoning and the implications for counselling in Nigeria. The family acts as the backbone with which children learn most of the social norms, values and ethics. As suggested by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the family is one of the fundamental microsystems in the development process (Ede et al., 2020). Well-being in this work refers to the state of people's physical, psychological, economic and social health.

Ethics is about how people come up with the decision of doing right or wrong. Moral: Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development present how people change from an egocentric perspective to one that is conventional and then to the post-conventional perspective/ Kohlberg (1981). This progression is attributable to healthy family functioning in that children have a context in which they can engage with moral problems and unfurl concerns of justice and compassion. Nigeria's family organization remains largely extended and characterized by collectivism in contrast to individualism (Okwunalu, 2023). The system provides emotional and financial support to the members of the extended family. But other factors such as economic difficulties, political instability and health care services challenges that have affected these family systems may influence the moral fabric of children.

Since the plight of the family uniquely captures morality in counselling theories, the strategies utilised in Nigeria should reflect the family status. It means that the family therapists and counsellors can do something to build the family relationship and at the same time do something about problems that hinder their health or stability. For instance, conflict resolution strategies may form the basis of counselling programmes, wherein financial planning workshops may also form the basis of counselling programmes. Furthermore, culturally sensitive counselling modalities that should be of the essence given Nigeria's collectivistic orientation need to be given more emphasis. According to Famodu (2023), counselling professionals should work with families, not target-specific clients. It considers that improvements in the family situation enhance better moral development in young people. The study hypothesises that youngsters from more competent and healthy families score better on the index of moral understanding. The literature review by Bamidele et al., (2023) unveiled that parental involvement in encouraging an affectionate home environment directly correlates with moral improvement among children. These findings are important in Nigeria due to the peculiar socio-economic situation about the fact that there is a need for policies that will enhance the welfare of families.

Moral reason is best understood as a process of socialization that is positively influenced by the characteristics of families in terms of the actual and emotional support, economic status and type of parenting, and structure and dynamics of the family as a whole. You must understand that Nigeria comprise different cultures, economies, and social settings and therefore the family acts as the backbone of moulding morality among children and the youth. However, evidence on how specific family well-being factors affect the process of moral reasoning remains limited, particularly from the Nigerian population.

A survey of the literature shows that the first ideas that children have concerning right and wrong come from their home settings (Ghorai et al., 2021). Therefore, family problems, as described by a break in the financial stability of the family, poor nose-feeding and child-rearing techniques may affect the moral development of Nigerian youths (Rotimi, 2023). Furthermore, Nigerian families possess their strains such as the economic boot; this reduces their chance of creating an atmosphere that fosters moral development (Ugwu, 2024). Conclude this section well by stating what this study is about

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of family well-being as a determinant of adolescents' moral reasoning development: implications for counselling in Nigeria, and the objectives are:

- 1. To identify the relationship between family well-being and the development of adolescents’ moral reasoning.
- 2. To explore the level of parents’ financial well-being on the development of adolescents’ moral reasoning.
- 3. To determine the combined relationship between family well-being and financial well-being influence on the development of adolescents’ moral reasoning.

Hypotheses

- 1. There is no significant correlation between family well-being and parents’ financial well-being on the moral reasoning development of adolescents in Nigeria.
- 2. There is no significant relationship between family well-being and the moral reasoning development of adolescents in Nigeria.
- 3. There is no significant relationship between parents’ financial well-being status and the moral reasoning development of adolescents in Nigeria.

Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were applied as research methodology. This made it possible to understand how family functioning affects the reasoning of morals and the consequences of counselling. The quantitative data were collected by using structured questionnaires with parents as respondents in financial status and family well-being on

adolescent moral reasoning.

Population

The target population is all secondary school students in the Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. A study conducted by the Lagos State Bureau of Statistics (2022) reveals 16,679 students in junior secondary public schools in Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government of Lagos State, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A technique of random sampling was employed to involve a sample of 200 Secondary School students in the Ifako-Ijaiye Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria, with different status of their socioeconomic and financial status.

According to the gender distribution, 86 students were male students, which accounted for 43.0% of the total respondents, while 114 students accounted for 57.0 % of the total respondents, who were female students. This means that most of the samples in this study were female students from public junior secondary schools.

Regarding the respondents’ parents’ income, the following distribution was obtained: Indeed, the first representing low-income respondents were respondents whose parents’ monthly income was less than one hundred thousand Naira. The second group was the middle-income respondents with parents that earn between the range of N100,000 - 500,000 monthly, while the third was recognised as the high-income earners where the parents’ income is more than N500,000 monthly. Also, 85.5% representing the majority of respondents were below N100,000 followed by 10.5% of respondents within the category of N100,000 - 500,000 and only 4.0% of respondents within the category of N500,000. Regarding the respondents’ fathers, 26.5% were artisans, 19.0% were traders, 11.5% were professionals (e.g., Engineers, bankers, accountants, doctors, pharmacists, teachers etc.), 3.0% were religious leaders (e.g., clergymen, pastors, imam etc.), 7.5% were entrepreneurs, 11.0% were civil servants (e.g., professional or paraprofessional workers in government ministries, departments and agencies [MDAs]), 8.5% were public servants (e.g., officers in armed forces, military or paramilitary), 10.0% were farmers, and 3.0% had no occupation. This means that the majority of the respondents’ fathers were active artisans.

Research Instruments

Quantitative data on family well-being, financial well-being, and adolescents' moral reasoning development were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The structured questionnaire consisted of three adapted scales: a 15-item Family Well-being Scale (FWS), a 24-item Moral Reasoning Scale (MRS), and a 10-item Financial Well-being Scale (FNWS). The questionnaire is structured by:

- Family well-being was measured using the extent scale: 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree.

- Financial well-being, which was measured using level with the following scale: 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree
- Adolescents' moral reasoning development, which was measured using extent with the following scale: 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree and 1-Strongly Disagree.
- The reliability was statistically calculated using Cronbach’s Alpha, the results obtained were 0.94 for “FWS”, 0.88 for “FNWS” and 0.90 for “MRS” at the 0.05 level of significance. These results indicated that the instrument was reliable, which showed a very high level of reliability.

Data Analysis

The hypotheses were analysed through Regression Statistics and Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Statistics. This was done by tallying the number of responses that provided similar answers by coding the responses to the questions into categories. The statistical technique applied was Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Statistics in an attempt to test all three hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant correlation between family well-being and parents’ financial well-being on the moral reasoning development of the participants.

Table 1: Regression Model Summary Indicating the Combined Relationship of Family Well-being and Financial Well-being on Moral Reasoning Development of the Adolescents.

R		R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	
.358		.128	.120		13.97829	
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	5668.550	2	2834.275	14.506	0.000	Sig.
Residual	38492.330	197	195.393			
Total	44160.880	199				

Dependent Variable: moral reasoning development of adolescents, Predictors: (Constant), family well-being and financial well-being.

Table 1 shows the combined influence of family well-being and financial well-being on the moral reasoning development of adolescents among public junior secondary school students. The regression model summary indicated that family well-being and financial well-being have a statistically significant combined influence on the moral reasoning development of adolescents, F (2, 197 = 14.506; p < .05). The R-value of 0.358 showed that the coefficient of multiple regression indicates that the combined relationship of family well-being and financial

well-being have a statistically significant combined influence on moral reasoning development of adolescents was moderate. The R2 adjusted value of .120 indicated that 12.0% of the variance in moral reasoning development of adolescents was a result of the combined influence of family well-being and financial well-being. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between family well-being and the moral reasoning development of adolescents in Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship Between Family Well-being and Moral Reasoning Development of Adolescents

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	r	P	Sig.
Family wellbeing	200	33.83	10.048	198	0.310**	0.000	Significant
Moral reasoning	200	22.34	14.897				

Table 2 revealed Pearson’s r correlation coefficient of family well-being and moral reasoning abilities of adolescents in secondary schools. It was found that, when the two variables were compared at 198 degrees of freedom, the simple correlation coefficient was statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there was a positive correlation between family well-being and moral reasoning of adolescents in secondary schools of moderate degree (Coefficient r =.31, O =.05). Therefore, null hypothesis two was turned down.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between parents’ financial well-being status and the moral reasoning development of adolescents in Nigeria.

Table 3: Relationship Between Parents’ Financial Well-being Status and Moral Reasoning Development of Adolescents

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	r	P	Sig.
Financial Wellbeing	200	34.92	11.247	198	0.327**	0.000	Significant
Moral Reasoning	200	22.34	14.897				

The Pearson’s r correlation coefficient between parents’ financial well-being status and moral reasoning of adolescent students in secondary school was presented in Table 3 as follows. At a significance level of 8382 0.05, we computed the degrees of freedom of the two variables at 198. This implies that there was a positive moderately strong correlation between parents’ financial well-being status and the moral reasoning of adolescents (.33, p ≤ 0.05). Therefore, H0 three was rejected.

Discussion

The results identified several important variables that influence family well-being: family support and involvement, quality of the parental relationship, family cohesion, single parenting, family conflict, and discipline. Firstly, the study revealed that there is a relationship between family and parents' financial status in the ontological development of adolescents in Nigeria. This further shows the influence of at least the well-being of a family as well as the economic status of parents in developing or enhancing the aspect of moral reasoning of teenagers in Nigeria. It concludes that a favourable family environment combined with sufficient funds has the potential to shape the moral and ethical standards of adolescents. From this, it is argued that Nigerian adolescents who come from families with sound financial and overall health status are bound to score higher points in moral development. This is consistent with studies regarding better behavioural and cognitive performance of children within favourable family environments. This is evidenced by prior research that has pointed out family support and financial capital as key antecedents of moral development among persons (Alam et al., 2023).

Secondly, the study also realised that there was a positive correlation between family well-being and the moral reasoning of teenagers in Nigeria, and it had a coefficient of 0.31 and was significant ($p < 0.05$). Rather, this discovery reinforces the testimony of the effects the appearance of a happy family has on the moral capacities of teenagers. This suggests a moderate positive relationship, meaning that to some extent, the higher the family health, the higher the adolescents' moral development. Parents are encouraged to create a balance of an environment within the home that boosts the morale of the young person apart from food support, but also emotional, physical, and communication support as well. Family well-being, therefore, plays a crucial role similarly as was established in other developments where a stable family is associated with the probability of positive moral and ethical behaviours to be exhibited by juveniles (Nwachukwu et al., 2024). A combination of close-knit and communicative family, as well as supportive attitudes, can help raise the moral levels of teenagers. This result conforms with findings on the implication of family functioning as a factor in the growth of the moral reasoning abilities of young people (Chukwu & Chiemeka, 2019).

Finally, the study established that parents' financial well-being status had a positive moderate significant correlation with the moral reasoning of adolescents in Nigeria; $r = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$. This can in turn imply that the prospect of parents' financial solvency can determine young people's capacity for moral judgment. Children from affluent families can gain access to educational facilities and other related services, and extra-curricular activities, and other moral-forming experiences within their young lives. It would also be expected that better financial resources may provide adolescents with access to superior educations, more opportunities for constructive out-of-school activities, and a much less stressful home environment, which would come with a better ability to reason morally. This association is in tandem with literature indicating economic stability as a fundamental pillar of the growth of cognitive and affective

development of children (Nja et al., 2022). With regard, this finding supports the premise earlier discussed that socioeconomic factors can indeed have an influence on one's moral reasoning abilities and promote the importance of seeking change to assist families from a broad economic bracket (Isokon et al., 2022).

Conclusion

In the study, the focus is made on the significant impact of family focus on the moral development of the children. The findings of the study reveal that family functioning as well as both parents' economic status greatly influence adolescent cognitive moral stages in Nigeria. This study also agrees with the end that perceptions of emotional and social support from the family impact adolescents' moral reasoning capacity. The family environment provides an environment where moral values can be overfilled morally. Financial stability also supports this in ways that enable families to buy alternative endowments that enhance the development of morality and ethics. The research sets aside the founder for elaborating more directions of using the concept of family well-being to explain the specifics of moral reasoning and underlining.

These findings suggest that the enhancement of moral reasoning among adolescents depends on the family's emotions and their financial status. If one was addressed without the other, it would likely compromise the effectiveness of building moral reasoning capacities in adolescents. This implies that the more the government can come up with policies such as family welfare, and financial security the better the moral outcome of youth would be.

Recommendations

In the following, some strategies that can be adopted to ensure that the family's welfare is improved because of which moral reasoning development gains the much-needed enhancement are offered:

1. **Counselling and Family Support Services:** A start should be made by opening community-based family counselling centres for children's support. These centres can provide such facilities as parenting classes, dealing with conflict, both verbally and physically and courses in financial management.
2. **Enhanced Education Programmes:** Family and moral education ought to be included in the syllabuses of schools' academic year and issues on the role of family in moral personality. Parent workshops can also be educationally helpful in matters of moral and ethical teaching.
3. **Economic Support:** Government and non-governmental organisations have to address the issue of poverty, as financial stability enhances a favourable family setting. Measures could comprise skills development and placement, micro-credit and other related business development activities.
4. **Policy Implementation:** Increase funding and efforts on policies, social, family, child protection and services. Many directives must be implemented for parental leave, both for

the mother and the father, wages for the working mothers and fathers, as well as social security for a healthy family base.

5. Community Involvement: Promote the formation of support services in the community for families. Guardians and stakeholders of society and community-based organizations have several major roles that can help ensure that families uphold good ethical standards.

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PARENTS' MARITAL CONFLICTS AS CORRELATE OF MORAL ADJUSTMENT BASED ON GENDER AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the correlation between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State, with a focus on gender differences. A correlation survey research design was employed, guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 878 senior secondary II students from a population of 8783 in Abia State. Data were collected using two instruments: Parents' Marital Conflict Questionnaire (PMCQ) and the Moral Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ). The instruments were validated by three experts from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. The instruments' reliability was assessed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, while their internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach Alpha statistic. These yielded 0.723, and 0.742 coefficients for the stability of MAQ, and PMCQ respectively as well as 0.764, and 0.676 for internal consistencies of MAQ, and PMCQ respectively. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions while linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study's findings revealed that gender does not significantly influence the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents. Consequently, the study concluded that parents' marital conflicts are strongly correlated with the moral adjustment of in-school adolescents in Abia State. Based on these findings, the study recommends that government and school proprietors employ at least one psychologist or school counselor to support students in addressing their moral adjustment challenges.

Keywords: Parents' marital conflicts, moral adjustment, gender, in-school adolescents

Introduction

Parents' marital conflicts are common phenomena in many households and their impact on in-school adolescents' moral adjustment could be a subject of concern. Tolorunleke (2014) sees parents' marital conflicts as the tension or stress between marital partners as the couple try to live out their marital roles. Unresolved marital conflict can escalate into severe consequences, including divorce or, in extreme cases, domestic violence. On the other hand, marital partners try to repress conflict, avoiding problems and detaching from each other. These in no small measure have led to broken homes and failed marriages which in one way or the other may affect the adjustment of their children in the society. It could have great impact on the moral attitude and behaviour towards good or bad and social adjustment of in-school adolescents. Edem (2021) observed that many students are product of broken homes as evident in their behaviours. Those students lack morality and find it extremely difficult to adjust to the demands of their immediate environment due to influence of marital breakdown or as a result of various marital conflicts in the homes (Edem 2021).

Most parents who have conflicts usually resort to drinking alcohols and taking harmful substances which they use as a 'way out' in their conflict management. As their children observe and copy from them, it affects their adjustment in the society. Besides, many in-school adolescents as a result of difficulties in adapting to their immediate environment tend towards drinking of varieties of alcohol such as beer, wine, rum, whiskey and taking hallucinogen like Indian hemp and so on. The impacts of these marital conflicts on the moral adjustment of in-school adolescents could be physical, psychological and social. The physical abuses are those experienced in the form of bruises, teeth bites, scars and swollen faces. The social abuses are in form of segregation, tribal sentiments and verbal fights. The psychological abuses are in form of manipulation and emotional exhaustion (Adaolu, 2020). In the context of this study, researchers view parents' marital conflict as any conflict that occurs between husband and wife as they live out their marital lives. According to Grych and Finchman (2020), in-school adolescents who witness marital conflicts may experience increased aggression, decreased prosocial behaviour and lacking in morality, as they may learn aggressive behaviours and attitudes from their parents' conflict. Morality involves learning to do right and wrong things.

Uzoka (2018) posited that the morality of in-school adolescents could be shaped by multiple factors, such as, what they inherit, where they habitually put their attention, what actions they choose, the perceptual sensitivities and most essentially the capacities they develop from how they were raised by their parents as well as their interactions to their immediate environment. These may suggest that conflicts in marriages could manifest negatively in the moral decadence of in-school adolescence which invariably may affect their moral adjustment in the society.

Moral adjustment is the extent to which individuals adjust their own sets of moral

standards and codes after encountering and engaging with characters (Grizzard & Eden, 2022). Smith (2018) defined moral adjustment as the continuous reformulation and reinterpretation of moral theories in a given spatio-temporal context. Moral theories according to Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2022) are the different interpretations and formulations of ethical codes. These moral theories often assume a progressive character which means they are always reformulated and reinterpreted. The friction which arises in the method and manner of reformulating and reinterpreting moral codes has created the popular Conservative and Liberal binary. The conservatives are those in-school adolescents who cling to traditional interpretation of moral codes, and are very slow and non-receptive to change especially with regard to moral theories. The Liberals on the other hand, are the progressive wing of moral theories. These in-school adolescents are quick and eager to propound and advance new moral theories, codes and ideas (Smith, 2018). In line with this, Grizzard, Francemone, Fitzgerald, Huang and Ahn (2020) assert that Moral adjustment investigates the different ways in which a moral theory exists. In the context of this study, Moral adjustment is the ability of an individual to adapt to what is right and reject wrong values. In this respect, when students are morally adjusted, there is the possibility of not being victims of marital conflicts at home. Hence, so many factors could be responsible for the students' moral adjustment of which their negative experiential background due to marital conflict could be a crucial factor.

Literature from outside Nigeria tend to suggest where there are marital conflicts, it is likely to affect girls more than boys. These bring about the use of gender as a moderating variable. Gender is a socially constructed concept, distinct from biological sex, and is shaped by societal norms, behaviours, and expectations based on an individual's sex (Perina, 2022; American Psychological Association, 2022). As a social construct, gender varies across cultures and evolves over time. However, gender inequality persists, leading to alarming rates of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage (World Health Organization, 2021).

Also, due to the high expectations placed on women/girls in the society, it could lead to low moral adjustment. Specific notions of masculinity may encourage boys and men to smoke, take sexual and other health risks, misuse alcohol and not seek help or health care as they develop and adjust in the society. Such gender norms also contribute to boys and men perpetuating violence as well as being subjected to violence themselves. Women and girls face significant moral and emotional challenges due to pervasive gender inequality and discrimination. In educational settings, girls often encounter greater obstacles than boys in adjusting to their surroundings. As highlighted by the World Health Organization (2021), these barriers encompass: restricted mobility, limited access to decision-making power, lower literacy rates, discriminatory attitudes within communities and among healthcare providers, Insufficient training and awareness of healthcare providers and health systems regarding the unique health needs and challenges faced by girls.

These obstacles compromise the moral well-being and health of women and girls,

emphasizing the need for targeted support and inclusive policies." Thus, gender could be suspected to play some roles in the extent marital conflict correlates with in-school adolescents' moral adjustment.

An adolescent is a young person in the transitional period between childhood and adulthood. WHO (2016) described an adolescent as a person in the period of adolescence ranging from 10 to 19 years. This means that young boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 19 are adolescents. Some of them are in secondary schools while some are out of schools. Those who are in secondary schools are called in-school adolescents while others are called out of school adolescents (Nwachukwu, 2022).

Several studies have been conducted on marital conflicts and moral adjustment among secondary school students. For instance Rahim (2019) conducted a study on moral adjustment and conflict management styles in Western Kentucky University and reported that there were no differences in obliging style across the moral adjustments of the participants. Also, Yinusa (2020) on Influence of Age, Gender and Value Orientation on In-school adolescents' Moral Adjustment in Conflict Situations in University of Nigeria Nsukka and reported that age was significantly related to moral adjustment. Secondly, gender was not significantly related to moral adjustment: male and female, boys and girls follow the same pattern. Koekemoer (2022) carried a research on the Moral Adjustment of in-school adolescents at the University of South Africa and reported that there is a strong correlation between the two factors and it can be considered to be statistically significant. Also A study by Krebs (2022) investigated interpersonal moral conflicts within romantic relationships, examining the impact of conflict type, role, and partner's judgments on moral reasoning and conflict resolution. The findings revealed that a significant relationship was found between the type of moral conflict and the moral judgments made by participants. Participants experiencing philosophical conflicts demonstrated more mature moral reasoning than those experiencing antisocial conflicts, particularly when assuming the role of transgressor, which was associated with less mature moral judgments. Furthermore, conflicts were more likely to be resolved when partners' moral judgments aligned in terms of moral maturity. Ahmed (2022) carried a study on Student's Moral Adjustment and its Relationship to Social Adaptation, at Nazirt region, in the University of Jordan and reported a significant correlation was found between moral adjustment and social adaptation. Warda, Abed, Wahab and Shattla (2022) did a study on marital conflicts among parents and its effect on their in-school adolescents' behaviours and the study revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the total marital conflict score and the total behavioural score. This finding led to the conclusion that a substantial relationship exists between parental marital conflict and the behaviour of their adolescent children in school."

Fani and Fani (2022) carried out a research on The relationship of parents' marital conflicts with students' life satisfaction and moral judgment development in Qumasi, Iran and the result from the regression analyses indicated a negative and significant relationship of parents' marital *conflict* with pupils' life *satisfaction* and moral *judgment development*. Parents'

marital *conflicts* dimensions were significantly predictor of life *satisfaction* and moral judgments development. The study sought to investigate parents' marital conflicts as correlate of moral adjustment based on gender among in-school adolescents in Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

In-school adolescents are expected to have acquired good morals from their parents, which could be evidenced in their mode of dressing, communications or relationships with school mates, teachers and disengagement in unsafe activities like armed robbery, drug abuse, violence, (bullying) among others. Unfortunately, there has been a public outcry on the high rate of moral decadence or moral degeneration among in-school adolescents especially in Abia State.

Hardly a day passes without hearing about one condemnation of the in-school adolescents' behaviour or the other. Violence, kidnapping, murder, suicide bombing, armed robbery, sectionalism, drug abuse, rape, unwanted pregnancy and hatred have become the order of the day. These in no small measures are indicators that these students are lacking in moral adjustments. The society is no longer safe because of the high rate of crime the in-school adolescents commit on daily basis. The incessant killings, banditry, theft and insecurities are evidence of the moral decadence and moral maladjustment of the youths.

These problems could be attributed to the homes where various marital conflicts exist between their parents in the family which the young persons' observe, learned and exhibit. In relation to this, when these conflicts are unresolved, they usually lead to broken homes and the children from such homes may become morally maladjusted which indicates that they have deep rooted low moral values. It is in line with the afore-mentioned observations that the researcher is motivated to find the extent parents' marital conflicts correlate with moral adjustment based on gender among in-school adolescents in Abia State.

Notably, the majority of existing studies on this topic have been conducted outside Nigeria, with a smaller number conducted within the country. However, the studies conducted in Nigeria appear to have overlooked the specific moral adjustment needs of in-school adolescents in Abia State, highlighting a significant research gap. Hence, the quest to bridge the gap motivated the researchers to carry out a study on parents' marital conflicts as correlates of moral adjustment based on gender among in-school adolescents in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State, with a focus on gender differences. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the correlation between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State.
2. Investigate the moderating role of gender on the relationship between parents' marital

conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents.

Research Questions:

1. What is the correlation between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State?
2. To what extent does gender influence the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State?

Hypotheses

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

HO₁ There is no significant correlation between parents’ marital conflicts and moral adjustment of in-school adolescents of Abia State.

HO₂ There is no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between parents’ marital conflicts and in-school adolescents’ moral adjustment.

Methodology

This study employed a correlation survey research design to investigate the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among senior secondary II students in Abia State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study.

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a sample of 878 students from a population of 8,783 senior secondary II students in Abia State. Two validated instruments, the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ) and Moral Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ), were used for data collection. The instruments were reviewed by three experts from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. The reliability coefficients for the instruments were: Stability: 0.723 (MAQ) and 0.742 (MCQ). Internal consistency: 0.764 (MAQ) and 0.676 (MCQ). Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to answer the research questions, while linear regression analysis was employed to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the analyses were presented in Tables as follows:

Research Question 1

To what extent do parents’ marital conflicts correlate with moral adjustment of in-school adolescents in Abia State?

Data for answering research question 1 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Relationship between Parents’ Marital Conflicts and Moral Adjustment

		Parents’ Marital Conflicts	Moral Adjustment
Parents’ Marital Conflicts	Pearson	1	.893
	Sig (2-tailed)		.007
	N	860	860
	R ²	(0.797) 80%	
Moral Adjustment	Pearson	.893	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	
	N	860	860

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), N = Number of respondents

The data in Table 1 shows a correlation R of .893 which is positive and within the coefficient limit or range of 0.80 and above indicating strong positive and a very high extent correlation. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between parents’ marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State. The correlation coefficient indicates a very high extent of relationship between the two variables. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R2 = 0.797) suggests that approximately 80% of the variation in moral adjustment among in-school adolescents can be attributed to parents' marital conflicts, indicating a significant predictive relationship.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant correlation between the parents’ marital conflicts and moral adjustment of in-school adolescents of Abia State.

Data for testing hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Linear Regression Analysis of Correlation between Parents’ Marital Conflicts and Moral Adjustment

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	p-value
1	Regression	1310.511	1	1310.511	940.783	.007
	Residual	1196.709	859	1.393		
	Total	2507.220	860			

df= degrees of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Data in Table 2 shows a p-value of .007 which is less than the alpha value of .05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant correlation was rejected and the alternated upheld. Therefore, there is significant correlation between the parents’ marital conflicts and moral adjustment of in-school adolescents of Abia State.

Research Question 2

What are the relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and in-school adolescents’ moral adjustment?

Data for answering research question 2 are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of the Relative Contribution of Gender on the Relationship between Parents’ Marital conflicts and in-school Adolescents’ Moral Adjustment

Source		Male	Female	MCIAMA
Male	Pearson Correlation	1		.378
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.102*
	N	860		860
	R ²	(.143) 14.3%		
Female	Pearson Correlation		1	.391
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.106
	N	860		860
	R ²	(.153) 15.3%		

MCIAMA= Marital Conflicts In-School Adolescent Moral Adjustment

Data in Table 3 indicates that a correlation coefficient (R) for male in-school adolescents’ moral adjustment as a result of marital conflicts is .378 which is positive and fall within the coefficient limit of ± 0.21-0.40 representing low extent correlation. This indicates that the moral adjustment of male students based on marital conflicts is to a low extent. The results indicate that the predictive power of marital conflicts on moral adjustment varies by gender. For male in-school adolescents, marital conflicts accounted for only 14.3% (R2 = 0.143) of the variance in moral adjustment, indicating a relatively weak relationship.

In contrast, the correlation coefficient (R = 0.391) for female in-school adolescents suggests a low to moderate positive relationship between marital conflicts and moral adjustment. However, marital conflicts still only accounted for 15.3% (R2 = 0.153) of the variance in moral adjustment among female adolescents. Overall, the findings suggest that the relative contribution of gender to the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment is relatively low, with marital conflicts predicting only 14.3% and 15.3% of the moral adjustments of male and female in-school adolescents, respectively.

Hypothesis 2

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis of the Relative Contribution of Gender on the Relationship between Parents’ Marital conflicts and in-school adolescents’ Moral Adjustment

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P-value
1	Regression	2418.330	1	2418.330	991.525	.104 ^b
	Residual	2094.777	859	2.439		
	Total	4213.107	860			

df= degrees of freedom, F = F-calculated, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Data in Table 4 shows a p-value of .104 which is greater than the alpha value of .05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant correlation was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relative contribution of gender on the relationship between parents’ marital conflicts and in-school adolescents’ moral adjustment.

Summary of Findings

"The study yielded the following key findings:

1. A very strong positive correlation exists between parents' marital conflicts and the moral adjustment of in-school adolescents, indicating a significant relationship.
2. The relative contribution of gender to the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and in-school adolescents' moral adjustment is not statistically significant, suggesting that the impact of marital conflicts on moral adjustment is relatively consistent across genders.

Discussion

Parents’ Marital conflicts and moral adjustment of in-school adolescents

Table 1 reveals a statistically significant and extremely strong positive correlation between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment of in-school adolescents in Abia State. This suggests that parents' marital conflicts significantly influence adolescents' moral behaviour, with higher conflict levels associated with greater moral adjustment and vice versa. This result agreed with the results from an earlier study by Koekemoer (2022) on moral adjustment of in-school adolescents at University which revealed a strong and statistically significant correlation. The study also agreed with the results from a study by Ahmed (2022) on the relationship between moral adjustment of students and their social adjustment which showed a significant relationship. The findings supported the findings of Ijoya, Moji and Ijoya (2015) which showed that one of the major effects of marital conflicts on the students is that of exhibition of bad behaviours. Similarly, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Warda, Abed, Wahab, and Shattla (2022), who investigated the impact of parents' marital conflict on adolescent behaviour. Their study similarly revealed a significant relationship between parents' marital conflict and the behaviour of their in-school adolescents, providing

further validation for the current study's results. The significant relationship between marital conflicts and students’ moral adjustment could be in line with Cummings (2015) who noted that in-school adolescents exposed to marital conflicts have significantly lower conflict resolution skills and higher aggressive responses.

Gender, Parents’ Marital Conflicts and Moral Adjustment of In-school adolescents

Table 3 shows that gender does not make a significant relative contribution to the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and in-school adolescents' moral adjustment. This suggests that while parents' marital conflicts have a significant correlation with adolescents' moral adjustment, this relationship is relatively consistent across genders, with no significant differences observed between male and female adolescents, they have a low extent correlation with moral adjustments when it is based on the gender of the students. In other words, the findings suggest that the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and adolescents' moral adjustment is not moderated by the students' gender. This result contradicts the assertion by Emery and O'Leary (2014) that the impact of marital conflict on adolescents varies by gender due to differing gender-specific characteristics. Instead, the current study suggests that the relationship between marital conflict and moral adjustment is relatively consistent across male and female adolescents. They argued that the difference of the impact along the gender of the students was based on the fact that parents treat their daughters and sons different. The results of the present study, corroborated with Yunisa (2020) on his study on moral adjustment and conflict management styles which revealed among others that gender was not significantly related to moral adjustment as both the male and female or boys and girls follow the same pattern. In a similar vein, the result aligned with Ahmed (2022) who in his study on students’ moral adjustment and its relationship to social adaptation found among others a low correlation of male and female students’ moral and social adaptation.

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and moral adjustment among in-school adolescents in Abia State. Based on the analysis and results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Parents' marital conflicts have a very strong and significant correlation with the moral adjustment of in-school adolescents.
2. Gender does not have a significant impact on the relationship between parents' marital conflicts and students' moral adjustment, indicating a consistent relationship across male and female adolescents.

Counselling Implications

The findings of the study have some educational implications for Government, Educational Psychologists, Counsellors, Teachers, Parents, students as well as future researchers.

1. The result of the study showed that Marital conflicts significantly to a very high extent correlate with moral adjustment of in-school adolescents. This result implies that some of the noticeable challenges of moral adjustment faced by some in-school adolescents were due to issues of marital conflicts in their respective homes. Therefore, there is need for family counselling. Counsellors can work with families to address marital conflicts, improve communication and promote healthy relationships, ultimately supporting adolescents' moral adjustment.
2. Since the result showed that there were no significant relative contributions of gender on the relationship between marital conflicts and in-school adolescents' moral adjustment, it implies that every teacher is expected to have the skills to handle the issues of moral adjustment of the students since they are to teach in the school or classes that have both male and female students with moral adjustment challenges. Therefore, counsellors can provide universal support to all in-school adolescents without assuming gender differences in their experiences of marital conflict and moral adjustment.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Governments and school proprietors should employ at least one Psychologist or school Counsellor to provide guidance and support to in-school adolescents experiencing moral adjustment challenges.
2. Teacher training institutions should incorporate topics into their curriculum that equip prospective counsellors with skills to address moral adjustment challenges in in-school adolescents, regardless of gender.

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INFLUENCE OF HOME BACKGROUND ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN CIVIC EDUCATION IN LOWER BASIC SCHOOLS, IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of home background and students' academic performance on civic education in lower basic secondary schools in Kaduna state, Nigeria. Two objectives, research questions and null hypotheses were formulated. The design of the study was correlational design. The population of the study consist of all the lower basic public secondary school students in Kaduna State, Nigeria, with the total number of one hundred and eighty-five thousand nine hundred and eighteen (185,918) The sample size of the study was three hundred and eighty-four (384) male and female students. Two instruments were used for this study. Family Background Questionnaire (FBIQ) and Academic Performance of Students. All null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and Kruskal Wallis inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis 1-2. The results revealed that parental education influence students' academic performance through helping them to solve assignment, extra home lesson, checking their academic progress and providing them with the required learning materials in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion ($p=125$). Also, parental income level influences students' academic performance through payment of school fees, buying of school uniforms, writing materials and feeding them well in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion ($p=262$). Based on the findings of this study it was concluded that: Parental education and income level improve students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state Parental occupation as well as marital status enhance students'

academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state. It was recommended that counsellors, educational psychologist should encourage parents and stakeholders to acquire education at all levels since their educational background positively influence students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

Keywords: Home Background, Academic Performance and Civic Education.

Introduction

Civic Education is one of the core subjects for the entire basic education level. According to Collins (2014), Civic education is the study of the theoretical, political and practical aspects of citizenship, as well as its rights and duties; the duties of citizens to each other as members of a political body and to the government. It includes the study of civil law and civil code, and the study of government with emphasis on the role of citizens as opposed to external factors in the operation and oversight of government. The main goal of civic education is to teach right attitudes, encourage good citizenship, and inculcate good leadership and fellowship, to encourage the spirit of friendship and cooperation and to discourage unholy and bad behaviours. Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN 2013). To attain these objectives, civic education requires an enabling learning environment for teaching.

According to Niger State Ministry of Education (2017) less than 43% of students that sat 5 for junior secondary school examination could not pass with a credit level in Civic Education. Situation analysis observed by the study shows that most of the teachers are still using traditional method of teaching, poor evaluation method, poor study environment as most of the class room are in deplorable condition, over population of students in the class, unqualified teachers among other problems. This study, therefore, investigates the Influence of home background and students' academic performance on civic education in lower basic schools, in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The researchers are of the view that the findings of the study could help to enhance the performance of students in civic education thereby improving the society generally.

The concept of "civic" is a Greek word which means citizens of a city or an area. This then means that Civic Education is a result of careful decision of the government to lead its citizens in different geographical and political communities to acquire some kinds of knowledge, facts, skills, abilities, values, virtues, attitude and behaviours that are acceptable in the society and useful in building a balanced and great nation (Ukegbu, Faskari, Adebayo, Obasi & Anyaoch, 2011). Donald and Odey (2017), saw Civic Education as an important means of teaching the populace about individual rights and what duties and responsibilities the governed leaders should do. Civic Education deals with people, the society and the environment. It is also a problem solving subject and therefore, it demands illustrations, analysis and critique of issues. It, therefore, follows that for the teacher to do well, the teacher must possess the inmate trait to achieve high level of implementation of civic education

curriculum in classroom instruction delivery. Civic Education is a specialized area of study that deals with acquisition of knowledge and concept (cognitive domain) and also with changes in value and attitude (affective domain) the development of skills both intellectual and manipulative (psychomotor domain) to enable the learner to take rational decisions to problems that affect him in the society. Civic education is a discipline that makes the learner to be well informed with values, attitude and desirable skills that make them valuable, functional and meaningful in the society. Azebanwan (2010), noted that as a subject, civic Education helps people to deal with the world around them in a more capable and confident way. It covers a wide range of issues, topics and legislation that impact on peoples' lives and daily living at all times and these are areas that are covered under civic education.

Home environment of a child influences the goals and values parents have for their children. These values could result in differences in parenting practices which, in turn result in differences in students' academic achievement/performance. In other words, parental educational qualification brings to light parents' involvement, confidence, ability to encourage, positive attitude, attainment of formal education and capacity to participate in their children school activities in order to facilitate their children good academic performance. Parents' educational qualifications can be classified into Higher education and lower education. Parents who are highly educated must have obtained Senior Secondary School certificate, Ordinary National Diploma/ National Certificate of Education (OND/NCE), Higher National Degree or Bachelor of Education in difference fields of learning. Post Graduate certificates like Diploma in Education, some of them must have obtained Masters in Education, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy (PGDE, MED, MSC, PHD) or others.

Students' academic performance at different subjects has become a source of worry for parent, teachers, and stakeholders in education and civic education is not an exemption too. It aims to help learners, learn how to become active, informed, and responsible citizens in their societies. The subject was introduced as part of the basic education program to all lower basic and upper basic secondary schools in Nigerian, in other to be responsible citizens (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007). Civic education is expected to inculcate the spirit of nationalism and desirable habits, values, and attitudes in students (Sheu and Eleana, 2020). It is a core curriculum for all levels of the contemporary Universal Basic Education (UBE) program including the senior secondary education level (Akpan & Ukpong, 2011). Abinitio, the subject was part of the Social Studies Curriculum before its content separation and was designed to form the core curriculum for implementation in the Universal Basic Education scheme. According to Odey et al. (2021), students' academic performance in Civic related subjects, such as civic education, has been found to be generally unsatisfactory, leaving room for improvement. Reports often indicate that students may lack adequate exposure to the subject's learning experiences. Several factors, including poor instructional delivery, lack of materials, and large class sizes, have been identified as potential contributors to this issue. Consequently, reports concerning civic social attitudes, civic self-concept and civic competences appear to

imply that they may not have been appropriately exposed to the learning experiences offered by the subject (Ali et al., 2015). Poor achievement in Civic Education can be attributed to many factors such as: lack of instructional materials, ill-utilization of time allocation, large class size and poor instructional delivery approaches (Chowdhury & Pati, 2011).

Family is an institution and a unit of socialization where the members receive informal education. Family is a primary agent of socialization and education. Home is regarded as the first place of a child and where he/she appropriates the behaviour patterns of the largest society, family is a major social organization and very vital for the development of a child (Adewuyi; 2009, Alabi, Babatunde, Olayinka & Yusuf, 2012). Every member of the family has various his/her roles to performed in order to engage the child's academic performance most especially in civic education, this is a subject that helps to transform them to active member of the family. The emotional and economic supports are some of the vital roles to be played by the parents to their children. Nevertheless, families vary in terms of their significance in the society. Not forgetting that some families have more power, prestige or status than others, also some families can cater for all the needs of their children in all aspect of their lives, including schooling while some cannot do shoulder it effectively.

Beside parents' academic qualification is another variable of student background environment which is parental occupation. This may make available some quality information to parents' who in turn may keep it at their disposal. Akerman (2012) stated that students whose parents are self-employed are encouraged by the independence and flexibility of self-employment to become entrepreneurs themselves. Parents who own their own business can be source of great inspiration for a young child. Entrepreneurial parents provide a good example, and are a source of influence for children.

Students whose parents have high level of income, enjoy support thereby influenced their academic achievement. The high level of income of a family is capable of affecting the behaviour of the children and determine their aspiration. Families with high level of income often have more success in preparing their children for school because they typically have access to wide range of providing their young children with high quality child-care, books and encourage children in various learning activities at home. (Ojo & Yilma 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Civic education has always been seen as that aspect of education that provides adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help people to know the different activities in society. Unfortunately underachievement in civic education can be associated with the methodology used by the classroom teachers and the instruction a teacher also applies. For example, the results of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) of 2018 revealed that only 38.68% of students who sat for it passed civic education. Thus, the teaching of the civic education may not have been properly done because most of the teachers handling the subject perhaps may have been using the conventional method which is teacher-centered and not child-centered action-based strategy.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study were set to determine the:

- ◆ Influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in lower Basic Schools in Kaduna state.
- ◆ Influence of parent income level on students' academic performance in civic education in lower Basic Schools in Kaduna state.

Hypotheses

- ◆ There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in lower Basic Schools in Kaduna state.
- ◆ There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parent income level on students' academic performance in civic education in lower Basic Schools in Kaduna state.

Literature Review

Alexander (2012), defined Civic Education as an important component of education that cultivates citizens to participate in the public life of a government and democracy, to use their rights and to discharge their responsibilities with the necessary knowledge and skills. Civic Education is concerned with the development of values, social norms, skill and democratic ideals in the citizens. According to Utulu (2011), Civic Education becomes very relevant since it essentially seeks to introduce the learners to the process of democratic socialization by promoting support for democratic behaviors and values among the citizens. Falade, Adedayo, Adeyemi and Adeniyi (2015), described Civic Education as a programme that helps children to know that they have rights and also duties. It enables the learners to develop a sense of good respect for the law and affection for the republic. Civic Education implies an understanding of the rules of democratic life and its fundamental principles. Civic Education teaches about the political system; it emphasizes the rights, roles and duties of every member of the society

The main essences of civic education are to transform or change the Nigeria as people of one destiny, reorientation towards self-reliance, understanding of the functionality of the Nigeria system of government and sound knowledge or emerging global social and health issues with particular reference to the Nigerian society. To achieve therefore mention goals, wide range of topics that cut across many areas of human endeavor are included in the study. Civic Education for junior secondary study encompasses general human values and harmony in the society. Other guarantee peace and harmony in the society. Other aspects are emerging health/social issues such as HIV/AIDs, youth empowerment, citizenship education and its goals/importance to democracy, its characteristics and pillars; human rights, characteristics and categories; cultism, drug its abuse and affects; responsible parenthood; traffic regulation inter personal and communal relationship, political apathy and its dangers, human trafficking

(Alexander 2012).

Obeta, (2014) determined some home environmental factors affecting the academic performance of students in Abia State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Three research questions guided the study. The finding of the study revealed among others that the provision of adequate educational material by parents and non-chalant attitudes of some parents towards the education of their children as well as the socio-economic status of the student's family, all affect the student's academic performance. Also revealed by the study are possible ways of amelioration which among others include giving proper orientation to the parents, on the implications and consequences of the type of family they may decide to adopt on the child's overall being, especially the child's academic performance.

Egunsola, (2014) examined the Influence of the Home Environment on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Agricultural Science in Adamawa State Nigeria. This study used ex-post facto and correlation surveys to investigate the influence of the home environment on the academic performance of senior secondary students in Adamawa State. The results showed that parental educational qualification ($r = 0.73$), occupation ($r = 0.71$) and home location ($r = 0.73$) were highly correlated with students' academic performance while parental economic status (income and affluence) have moderate correlation ($r = 0.60$) but all the independent variables have significant influence on students' performances in Agricultural Science at the secondary school.

Adeyinka, and Aderibigbe, (2018) studied the perceived effects of parental socio-economic status on students' academic performance, among teachers in Odeda Local Government Area of Ogun State. The findings revealed that parental socio-economic status, educational level and family size may have a significant relationship with the academic performance of students.

Muhammad, Bello, Yusuf, Daramola, Obimuyiwa, (2017) investigated the relationship between parental background and civic education students' performance towards sustainable development in Ilorin South Local Government area. This study focused on variables such as; parental occupation, parental level of education and family size. Proportionate sampling technique was adopted for selection of 234 respondents out of 633. A researchers' designed questionnaire with psychometrics properties of content validity and 0.76 reliability index was used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that 59% respondents passed civic education in their last external examination while 41% failed the subject. The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between parental background and performance of Civic Education students in the area. As a result of these findings, it was recommended that parents should be more passionate, and they should be ready to play significant roles in their children academic performance.

Hassan (2023), investigated the effect of the Guided Discovery instructional strategy on

students' academic achievement in civic education in the Ijebu Ode Local Government Area of Ogun state, Nigeria. Three null hypotheses were tested in the study. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design. The population of the study comprised all civic education students in public senior secondary schools in Ijebu Ode, local government of Ogun state, Nigeria. Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The result shows a significant main effect of instructional strategy ($F(1, 121) = 35.508, p < 0.05$) on students' academic achievement in Civic education. It also shows a significant main effect of gender on students' academic achievement in Civic Education ($F(1, 121) = 4.688, p < 0.05$). While the result of the 2-way interaction effect shows no significant interaction effect of instructional strategy and gender on students' academic achievement in Civic education ($F(1, 121) = .5665, p > 0.05$).

Ibitoye (2017) carried out a study on the Impact of Learning Environment on junior secondary schools' students' performance in Civic Education in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study has four (4) objectives, four (4) research questions and four (4) hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study. The study adopted ex-post facto research design. The total population of the study comprised 10,295 students, out of which a sample size of 375 respondents was used for the study. The instrument tagged Learning Environment and Students, Findings revealed, among others, that learning environment has impact on students, performance in civic education in urban and rural junior secondary schools in Kogi State and class size has impact on performance of students in civic education in junior secondary schools in Kogi State.

Ebhohimen (2021) examined the impact of classroom learning environment on the performance of students in civic education in upper Basic education in Niger state, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that; teachers' qualification significantly influence the performance of students in civic education (p-value of 0.003 0.05). The result indicates that, Classes with more than 45 students do not foster greater interaction among students and teacher (p-value of 0.000 0.05). Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that building have significant impact on the teaching and learning of Civic Education which ultimately influences students' performance. In views of this, academic performance is generally referred to how well a student is accomplishing his/her tasks and studies, but there are quite a number of factors that determine the level and quality of students' academic performance.

Methodology

The design employed for this study is descriptive survey research. A survey research design is concerned with findings, describing and interpreting an existing phenomenon, conditions or relationships between or among people. The population of this study is consisting of all the JS1 to JSS3 students in public senior secondary school students in Kaduna State with the total number of one hundred and eighty-five thousand nine hundred and eighteen (185,918) The sample size of the study was three hundred and eighty-four (384) male and female students in Kaduna state Nigeria. Two instruments were used for the study. The instrument are Family Background

Questionnaire (FBIQ) and Academic Performance of Students which was adapted from the work of Ugwuja, (2010). The questionnaire was made up of twenty-six (26) items on influence of parental education, parental occupation, parental income, family size and parental marital status. All null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and Kruskal Wallis inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis 1-2. The instruments were validated by professionals in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling Faculty of Education Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, where all the observations and corrections raised especially on clarification of sentences and separation of post-traumatic symptoms were all affected and validated for the study. Data collected were analyzed using Kruskal Wallis inferential statistics was used to test the hypothesis 1-2 (SPSS), to find out Influence of home background and students' academic performance on civic education in lower basic schools, in Kaduna state, Nigeria. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

Data on the opinion of respondents on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state were collected. To test the null hypothesis one, Kruskal-Wallis (H-test) statistic was used. The summary of the analysis is presented in

Table 1: Summary of Kruskal-Wallis test Analysis of Influence of Parental Level of Education on Students' Academic Performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state

Kruskal-Wallis H	4.162
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.125

Significant at level of ≤ 0.05

The analysis of data in Table 1 shows difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state. The result reveals Kruskal-Wallis H value of 4.162 with Asymp. Significant value of 0.125. The null hypothesis is retained which indicates no difference in the opinions of respondents on the influence of parental level of education on students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

There is no significant difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parent's income level on students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state

Data on the opinion of respondents on the influence of parent’s income level on students’ academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state were collected. To test the null hypothesis two, Kruskal-Wallis (H-test) statistic was used. The summary of the analysis is presented in

Table 2: Summary of Kruskal-Wallis test Analysis of Influence of Parent’s Income Level of Education on Students’ Academic Performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

Kruskal-Wallis H	1.245
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.265

Significant at level of ≤ 0.05

The analysis of data in Table 2 shows difference in the opinion of respondents on the influence of parental income level on students’ academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state. The result reveals Kruskal-Wallis H value of 1.245 with Asymp. Significant value of .262. The null hypothesis is retained which indicates no difference in the opinions of respondents on the influence of parental income level on students’ academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

Summary of Findings

Influence Parental level of education students’ academic performance through helping them to solve assignment, extra home lesson, checking their academic progress and providing them with the required learning materials on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion (p=125).

Parental income level influences students’ academic performance through payment of school fees, buying of school uniforms, writing materials and feeding them well on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion (p=262).

Discussion

This study focuses on Influence of home background and students’ academic performance on civic education in lower basic schools, in Kaduna state, Nigeria

The first finding revealed that Parental level of education influence students’ academic performance through helping them to solve assignment, extra home lesson, checking their academic progress and providing them with the required learning materials on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion (p = 125). The findings are in line with Ebhohimen (2021) who examined the impact of classroom learning environment on the performance of students in civic education in upper Basic

education in Niger state, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that; teachers' qualification significantly influence the performance of students in civic education (p-value of 0.003 0.05). The result indicates that, Classes with more than 45 students do not foster greater interaction among students and teacher (p-value of 0.000 0.05). The study also agrees with the study of Ibitoye (2017) who examine the Impact of Learning Environment on junior secondary schools' students' performance in Civic Education in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Findings revealed, among others, that learning environment has impact on students, performance in civic education in urban and rural junior secondary schools in Kogi State and class size has impact on performance of students in civic education in junior secondary schools in Kogi State. In Muhammad, Bello, Yusuf, Daramola, Obimuyiwa, (2017) investigated the relationship between parental background and civic education students' performance towards sustainable development in Ilorin South Local Government area. The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between parental background and performance of Civic Education students in the area. As a result of these findings, it was recommended that parents should be more passionate, and they should be ready to play significant roles in their children academic performance. The present study is in line with Adeyinka, and Aderibigbe, (2018) Findings revealed that parental socio-economic status, educational level and family size may have a significant relationship with the academic performance of students

The second result revealed that Parental income level influences students' academic performance through payment of school fees, buying of school uniforms, writing materials and feeding them well on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state and respondents are of the same opinion (p=262). The findings are consistent with Muhammad, Bello, Yusuf, Daramola, Obimuyiwa, (2017) investigated the relationship between parental background and civic education students' performance towards sustainable development in Ilorin South Local Government area.

The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between parental background and performance of Civic Education students in the area. As a result of these findings, it was recommended that parents should be more passionate, and they should be ready to play significant roles in their children academic performance. The study is in line with the finding of this study agreed with the report of Egunsola, (2014) who reported that parental economic status (income and affluence) have moderate correlation ($r = 0.60$) with student performance. The finding of this study is supported by the finding of Obeta, (2014) found that none provision of adequate educational material by parents and nonchalant attitudes of some parents towards the education of their children as well as the socio-economic status of the student's family, all affect the students' academic performance. Omoraka (2017) notes that children with rich parents have certain needs, physical and sociological which when met contribute positively to their academic performance. These needs may include a conducive reading atmosphere, good food, playground, provision of books and other materials and attendance at the best schools available. All these helps to promote effective learning and good performance in schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that: Parental education and income level improve students' academic performance on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state. Similarly Parental occupation as well as marital status enhance students' academic performance on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

Recommendation

- ◆ It was recommended that counsellors, educational psychologist should encourage parents and stakeholders to acquire education at all levels since their educational background positively influence students' academic performance in civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.
- ◆ Government, religious leaders and non-governmental organization should be encouraged and motivated and provide possible remedy to the parental to continue to acquire more legal income since they are found to improve influence students' academic performance on civic education in Lower Basic Education in Kaduna state.

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ROLE OF COUNSELLING IN ENHANCING FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Functional education aims to equip learners with practical skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to their lives and careers. This paper explores the concept of Counselling, crucial role of counselling in enhancing functional education by addressing students' psychological, emotional, and social needs, and aligning educational experiences with real-world applications. Through an examination of counselling strategies and their impact on educational outcomes, this paper highlights how counselling can facilitate a more effective and holistic approach to functional education. Functional education emphasizes practical skills and knowledge that prepare individuals for effective participation in society. Counselling plays a pivotal role in this educational approach by addressing the psychological, emotional, and social needs of students, enabling them to harness their potential fully. This paper explores the integral role of counselling in functional education, examining how counselling strategies can be applied to foster student development, enhance learning outcomes, and address challenges that hinder educational effectiveness. The discussion includes the significance of counselling in educational settings, its impact on functional education, and practical recommendations for integrating counselling services into educational institutions.

Keywords: Counselling, education, social well-being, functional education

Introduction

In the contemporary world, education is increasingly recognized not just as a pathway to personal and professional development but also as a critical tool for societal progress.

Functional education, which emphasizes practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability, is essential in preparing individuals to meet the challenges of the 21st century. However, despite the significant investments in education systems, many students still struggle to attain the level of functionality required to thrive in today's dynamic environment (Brown & Lent, 2019). This gap often stems from various personal, psychological, and social challenges that hinder their ability to fully engage with and benefit from the educational process.

Counselling has emerged as a vital support system within educational settings, addressing the myriad challenges that students face. The role of Counselling in education goes beyond academic guidance; it encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of students. providing a safe space for students to express their concerns, Counselling helps them develop resilience, self-awareness, and coping strategies (Kolb, 2014). This holistic approach ensures that students are not only equipped with academic knowledge but also possess the emotional and psychological tools necessary to apply their learning in real-world contexts.

The integration of counselling into the educational framework is particularly crucial in enhancing functional education. Counsellors work with students to identify and overcome barriers to learning, such as anxiety, low self-esteem, and social difficulties, which can impede their academic performance and overall development. Additionally, counselling fosters critical life skills such as decision-making, communication, and interpersonal relationships, all of which are essential components of functional education (Kim & Seo, 2018).

In many educational systems, particularly in developing countries, the role of counselling is often underutilized or overlooked. However, research has shown that when Counselling services are effectively integrated into the educational process, there is a marked improvement in students' academic performance, social adjustment, and overall well-being (Steinmayr, Weidinger, Schwinger, & Spinath, 2019). This highlights the need for educational institutions to prioritize counselling as a key component of functional education.

This conference paper explores the critical role of Counselling in enhancing functional education. It examines the various ways in which Counselling can help students' personal and academic development, discusses the challenges faced in implementing Counselling services in educational institutions, and provides recommendations for integrating Counselling into the broader educational framework. Through a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between Counselling and functional education, this paper aims to underscore the importance of a holistic approach to education that prepares students not only for academic success but also for life beyond the classroom.

Functional education encompasses educational practices designed to develop skills and competencies that are directly applicable to students' lives. This includes vocational training, life skills education, and experiential learning opportunities that bridge the gap between academic content and real-world applications (American School counselor Association, 2019). The goal is to produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also capable of applying

their learning in practical contexts.

Functional education aims to equip learners with practical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for meaningful participation in their communities and the wider society. It contrasts with traditional education, which often emphasizes theoretical knowledge without immediate real-world application (Darlin, Cook & Oser, 2020). The core of functional education is to bridge the gap between learning and practical application, preparing students to solve real-life problems, contribute to their communities, and succeed in the workforce.

Counselling, as a professional discipline, focuses on assisting individuals in achieving personal, academic, and career goals in addressing psychological, social, and emotional challenges. In view of functional education, Counselling becomes essential in supporting students as they navigate the demands of acquiring practical skills and knowledge. This paper explores the multifaceted role of Counselling in functional education, emphasizing how it can enhance student engagement, address individual differences, and promote overall well-being.

Concept of Counselling

It is a process where an individual, couple or family meets with a trained professional counsellor to talk about issues and problems that they are facing in their lives. professional Counselling is confidential and non-judgmental. Counselling can provide people with the opportunity to share their views, be heard and gain new perspectives on their situation and experiences. Counselling can help people to gain clarity surrounding issues. Together with their counsellor people identify and work towards achieving the desired outcomes and goals for Counselling. Counselling is a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals (Kim & Seo, 2018).

Role of Counselling in Functional Education

Enhancing Student Engagement and Motivation: One of the primary roles of Counselling in functional education is to enhance student engagement and motivation. Functional education requires active participation from students as they learn to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations. Counselling can help students recognize the relevance of their education to their future goals, thereby increasing their intrinsic motivation to learn. Career Counselling can guide students in understanding the practical applications of their education, helping them make informed decisions about their career paths. Connecting their academic pursuits with real-world opportunities, students are more likely to stay engaged and motivated. Through Counselling, students can develop personalized learning plans that align with their strengths, interests, and future aspirations. This individualized approach fosters a sense of ownership over their education, further enhancing engagement (National Center for Education, 2021).

Addressing Individual Differences: Students come from diverse backgrounds with varying abilities, interests, and challenges. Counselling plays a crucial role in addressing these

individual differences to ensure that all students benefit from functional education. Counselors work with teachers to implement differentiated instruction strategies that accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. Identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, counselors can help educational experiences to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed. Counselling is vital in providing students with special needs, ensuring that they receive appropriate accommodations and interventions. This is critical in functional education, where practical skills are often emphasized, and students with special needs may require additional assistance to develop these skills (Hommelhoff, Schröder, & Niessen, 2020).

Promoting Social and Emotional Development: Functional education is not solely about academic achievement; it also focuses on developing social and emotional skills that are essential for success in life. Counselling supports this aspect of education by promoting the social and emotional well-being of students. Counselling helps students develop emotional resilience, enabling them to cope with challenges and setbacks that they may encounter in their education and personal lives. Emotional resilience is particularly important in functional education, where students are often required to work collaboratively and solve complex problems. Through counselling, students can learn effective conflict resolution and interpersonal skills, which are essential for teamwork and collaboration. These skills are critical in functional education settings, where group work and practical applications are common (Fall, Holden, & Marquis, 2017).

Supporting Academic Achievement: While functional education emphasizes practical skills, academic achievement remains an important component. Counselling plays a key role in supporting students' academic success especially addressing barriers to learning and providing strategies for improvement. Counsellors assist students in developing effective study habits, time management skills, and goal-setting strategies that enhance their academic performance. Addressing academic challenges early, Counselling helps prevent students from falling behind and encourages continuous progress. For students who are at risk of academic failure, Counselling provides targeted interventions that address the underlying causes of their difficulties. This may include counselling for personal issues, such as family problems or mental health concerns, that are impacting their academic performance (Kin & Henry, 2021).

Facilitating Career Readiness: A key goal of functional education is to prepare students for successful careers. Counselling plays a critical role in facilitating career readiness by helping students develop the necessary skills and attitudes for the workforce. Counselling can support the development and implementation of career development programs that provide students with the tools and resources needed to succeed in their chosen careers. This includes resume writing workshops, interview preparation, and job search strategies. Counsellors can help students identify and pursue work-based learning opportunities, such as internships and apprenticeships, that provide practical experience and enhance their employability (Osher, Kidron, Brackett, Dymnicki, Jones, & Weissberg, 2016).

Personal Development and Self-Awareness: Counselling supports students in understanding their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and values. Helping students develop self-awareness, counsellors enable them to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths. This alignment of personal goals with educational objectives enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the learning experience (Ertelt, Schulz, & Frey, 2022).

Academic and Career Guidance: Counsellors provide essential guidance on academic choices and career planning. Offering career assessments, educational planning, and advice on vocational training, counsellors help students select courses and extracurricular activities that align with their career aspirations. This guidance ensures that students' educational experiences are relevant to their future goals (Kin & Henry, 2021). In the Nigerian environment, academic and career guidance plays a crucial role in addressing common concerns such as high unemployment rates, career mismatches, and poor academic performance.

Practical ways through which Counselling can help resolve these issues include:

- i. *Career Awareness Programs:* Schools and universities can organize career days and workshops where professionals from various industries interact with students, providing real-world insights into career opportunities. This helps bridge the knowledge gap between academic learning and job market demands.
- ii. *Personalized Career Assessments:* Through psychometric tests and career interest inventories, counselors can help students identify their strengths, weaknesses, and interests, guiding them toward career paths that align with their abilities. This is particularly important in Nigeria, where many students select courses based on parental pressure or societal expectations rather than personal aptitude.
- iii. *Educational Planning and Skill Development:* Counselors can guide students in choosing the right subject combinations that match their career aspirations. They can also encourage skill development in entrepreneurship, vocational training, and digital literacy, which are essential for Nigeria's evolving job market.
- iv. *Guidance on Admission and Scholarships:* Many students in Nigeria face challenges in accessing higher education due to a lack of information on admission processes, available scholarships, and alternative pathways like technical education. Counselors can provide clarity on these opportunities, reducing the dropout rate and ensuring informed decisions.
- v. *Support for Special Needs and Disadvantaged Students:* Career Counselling can be tailored to support students with disabilities, those from low-income backgrounds, and marginalized groups, helping them access education and career opportunities suited to their circumstances.
- vi. *Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment Counselling:* Given the limited formal employment opportunities in Nigeria, counselors can introduce students to entrepreneurship, teaching them how to start small businesses and leverage government initiatives like the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). By implementing these

Counselling strategies, students in Nigeria can make informed academic and career choices, reducing unemployment, enhancing job readiness, and fostering national development.

Emotional and Psychological Support: The emotional and psychological well-being of students is critical for effective learning. Counselling addresses issues such as stress, anxiety, and personal challenges that may hinder students' academic performance and engagement. providing support and coping strategies, counsellors create a conducive learning environment that enhances students' ability to focus and succeed (Kolb, 2014). In the Nigerian educational environment, students face various emotional and psychological challenges that impact their academic success. Factors such as economic hardship, family pressures, academic competition, peer influence, and insecurity contribute to stress and anxiety among students. Counselling plays a crucial role in addressing these concerns through practical interventions:

- i. *School-Based Counselling Programs* – Schools can establish dedicated Counselling units where trained professionals provide regular support to students experiencing stress, anxiety, or personal struggles. This can be achieved by organizing one-on-one sessions, group therapy, and workshops on mental well-being.
- ii. *Stress Management and Coping Strategies* – Counselors can teach students practical techniques such as mindfulness, time management, and relaxation exercises to help them manage stress effectively. For example, Nigerian schools can introduce stress relief programs before major exams to reduce test anxiety.
- iii. *Parental Involvement and Family Counselling* – Many Nigerian students face family-related stress due to economic difficulties, parental expectations, and household conflicts. Counselors can work with parents to improve communication and understanding, helping to create a supportive home environment.
- iv. *Career Guidance and Personal Development* – Nigerian students often experience anxiety regarding career choices and future prospects. Counselling can provide career guidance, aptitude assessments, and mentorship programs to help students make informed decisions about their educational and professional paths.
- v. *Peer Counselling and Support Groups* – Establishing peer Counselling initiatives within schools and universities allows students to support one another under the supervision of trained professionals. This creates a network where students feel comfortable discussing their struggles with their peers in a structured setting.
- vi. *Addressing Trauma and Insecurity-Related Stress* – Given the challenges of insecurity in some parts of Nigeria, including insurgency and communal conflicts, many students may experience trauma. School counselors can provide trauma-focused Counselling and resilience-building workshops to help affected students cope and reintegrate into their academic pursuits. By implementing these Counselling strategies, Nigerian educational institutions can create a more supportive and mentally healthy learning environment,

ultimately improving students’ academic performance and overall well-being.

Enhancing Social Skills and Interpersonal Relationships: Functional education often requires collaboration and effective communication. Counselling programs that focus on social skills development, conflict resolution, and interpersonal relationships prepare students for successful interactions in both academic and professional settings. These skills are crucial for fostering a positive learning environment and building professional networks (Kin & Henry, 2021).

Facilitating Experiential Learning Opportunities: Counsellors play a role in connecting students with internships, apprenticeships, and other experiential learning opportunities that provide practical experience and enhance the relevance of their education. These experiences are essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application (Dahir, Cinotti, & Feirsen, 2019).

Challenges in Implementing Counselling in Functional Education

While the benefits of counselling in functional education are clear, there are several challenges to implementing Counselling services effectively. These challenges include:

1. *Limited Resources:* Many educational institutions, particularly in low-income areas, may lack the resources to provide comprehensive counselling services. This can limit the ability of counsellors to address the diverse needs of students.
2. *Stigma around Counselling:* In some cultures, there may be a stigma associated with seeking counselling, which can prevent students from accessing the support they need. Overcoming this stigma requires concerted efforts to promote the value of counselling and normalize its use in educational settings.
3. *Integration with Educational Practices:* Integrating counselling into the educational framework can be challenging, particularly in schools that prioritize academic achievement over student well-being. There is a need for a cultural shift that recognizes the importance of Counselling in achieving educational goals.

Suggestions

To maximize the impact of counselling in functional education, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. *Increase Access to Counselling Services:* Educational institutions should prioritize the availability of Counselling services in allocating sufficient resources and training staff to provide effective support.
2. *Promote a Holistic Approach to Education:* Schools should adopt a holistic approach to education that values both academic achievement and student well-being. This can be achieved by integrating counselling services into the educational framework and promoting their use among students.

3. *Foster Collaboration Between Educators and Counsellors:* Collaboration between educators and counsellors is essential for addressing the diverse needs of students. Regular communication and joint planning can ensure that counselling services are aligned with educational goals.
4. *Raise Awareness and Reduce Stigma:* Efforts should be made to raise awareness about the benefits of counselling and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help. This can be achieved through campaigns, workshops, and open discussions that normalize the use of counselling services.

Conclusion

Counselling plays a vital role in functional education by supporting the psychological, emotional, and social needs of students. Through counselling, students can develop the skills and attitudes necessary for success in both their academic and personal lives. Addressing individual differences, enhancing engagement, and promoting career readiness, counselling contributes to the overall effectiveness of functional education. To fully realize the benefits of counselling, educational institutions must overcome the challenges of implementation and prioritize the integration of counselling services into their educational frameworks. Through these efforts, functional education can fulfill its promise of preparing students for meaningful and productive lives.

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EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES IN COUNSELLING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND MEDIATION IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the comparative effectiveness of traditional, modern, and hybrid conflict resolution approaches as mediation strategies in counselling. The study identified the most employed strategies, their distinct characteristics and applications across different types of conflicts. It also assessed the outcomes of these strategies, detailing on their effectiveness not only in resolving conflicts but also in maintaining a long-term peace. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 100 participants from the population of a broad range of stakeholders involved in conflict resolution and mediation strategies in southwest Nigeria. The instrument for data collection is a researcher-designed questionnaire known as Counselling Strategies for Mediation and Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (COSMECRQ). The obtained data were analyzed with descriptive statistics. The findings of the study showed among others that the traditional methods, particularly those involving community elders and cultural customs, are highly valued due to their local legitimacy and effectiveness in resolving community-level disputes. Recommendations were made among others that there should be formal recognition and incorporation of traditional methods into official frameworks, that increased training for traditional leaders in modern mediation techniques be intensified, and that policy support for integrated approaches that address socio-economic and political root causes of conflicts be employed. This study contributed to the understanding of conflict resolution dynamics in Nigeria and provided actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars interested in developing more effective and culturally responsive conflict mediation strategies.

Keywords: Counselling Strategies, Conflict, Conflict resolution, and mediation

Introduction

Conflict is an inherent aspect of human relationships and social interactions. In Nigeria, a country characterized by its ethnic diversity, religious plurality, and complex socio-political landscape, conflicts are frequent and multifaceted (Bamidele, 2020). These conflicts range from

interpersonal disputes within families and communities to broader interethnic and interreligious tensions. The prevalence of such conflicts necessitates effective resolution and mediation strategies to foster peace and stability. Counselling for conflict resolution and mediation focuses on facilitating communication between conflicting parties to find mutually acceptable solutions. The goal is not only to resolve the immediate conflict but also to equip individuals with the skills to handle future disputes constructively (Omotosho et al., 2020). Effective conflict resolution and mediation strategies can significantly improve relationships, enhance personal growth, and foster a cooperative environment.

Effective conflict resolution and mediation strategies are critical for maintaining social harmony and preventing the escalation of disputes. Counselling plays a pivotal role in these processes by providing structured frameworks and therapeutic interventions that address the underlying issues causing conflicts. It has shown that well-implemented counselling strategies can lead to significant improvements in communication, understanding, and emotional regulation among conflicting parties (Jones, 2020; Smith & Brown, 2019).

The study aims to identify which approaches are most effective in achieving sustainable peace, client satisfaction, and improved relational outcomes. Understand these dynamics is essential for developing tailored interventions that resonate with Nigeria's cultural and societal norms, ultimately enhancing the practice of counselling and its impact on conflict resolution in the country.

According to Omotosho et al (2020), Nigeria an africa's most populous country, is a complex and diverse nation with over 250 ethnic groups and numerous religious affiliations. This rich diversity often gives rise to significant conflicts, which span communal, ethnic, religious, and political dimensions. The persistent and multifaceted nature of these conflicts presents substantial challenges to social cohesion and national stability:

1. *Ethnic and Communal Conflicts:* Nigeria has a long history of ethnic and communal violence, particularly in regions such as the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta. These conflicts often stem from historical grievances, competition for resources, and issues of land ownership. The lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms exacerbates these disputes, leading to cycles of violence and retaliation (Bamidele, 2020).
2. *Religious Tensions:* Religious conflict is another significant issue in Nigeria, particularly between the predominantly Muslim North and the mainly Christian South. These tensions are often fueled by political manipulation and socioeconomic inequalities. The inability to address these conflicts through dialogue and mediation has resulted in recurrent violent clashes, such as those seen in Jos and Kaduna (Jegade, 2019).
3. *Political and Electoral Violence:* Nigeria's political landscape is marked by intense competition and often violent contestation. Electoral processes are frequently marred by violence, fuelled by allegations of corruption, voter intimidation, and rigging. The failure to resolve political disputes through peaceful and democratic means undermines public

trust in the electoral process and the legitimacy of government institutions (Yusuf, 2019).

4. *Economic Disparities and Social Injustice:* Economic disparities and social injustices are critical underlying factors in many of Nigeria's conflicts. The unequal distribution of wealth and opportunities fuels resentment and frustration, particularly among marginalized communities. This economic dimension of conflict is often overlooked in mediation efforts, limiting the effectiveness of resolutions (Eneji & Agri, 2020).
5. *Insurgency and Security Challenges:* The rise of insurgent groups like Boko Haram in the Northeast has further complicated Nigeria's conflict landscape. These groups exploit social grievances and weak governance structures to perpetuate violence and instability. Traditional conflict resolution and mediation strategies struggle to address the complexities of insurgency, which requires comprehensive and multi-faceted approaches (Mallam, 2019).

Thus, the persistent and multifaceted nature of conflicts in Nigeria necessitates effective conflict resolution and mediation strategies. However, existing mechanisms often fail to address the root causes of conflicts, leading to recurrent cycles of violence and instability. To promote lasting peace and stability, there is a pressing need for innovative and context-specific approaches to conflict resolution and mediation in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Conflict resolution and mediation are rooted in several theoretical frameworks that provide insight into the dynamics of conflicts and the methods for resolving them, the theories include: Conflict Theory, Human Needs Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Systems Theory. Conflict theory posits that societal structures and relationships are primarily shaped by power dynamics and conflicts of interest between groups. Originally rooted in the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883), who focused on class struggles, modern conflict theory has expanded to include a wide range of social conflicts, including those based on race, ethnicity, religion, and politics (Folger et al., 2021).

Conflict Theory in the Nigerian Context

Nigeria presents a complex environment for studying conflict due to its diverse ethnic, religious, and political landscape. Conflict theory is particularly useful in understanding the various conflicts that have plagued Nigeria and in developing effective resolution strategies.

Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

1. *Ethnic Diversity and Competition:* Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture and interests. Conflicts often arise from competition over political power and resources among these groups. Conflict theory helps explain how ethnic elites mobilize their groups to compete for control over the state and its resources (Omotosho et al., 2020).
2. *Religious Tensions:* Nigeria is divided between a predominantly Muslim North and a

Christian South, leading to frequent religious conflicts. These conflicts are often fuelled by perceived or real inequalities in political representation and economic opportunities. Understanding these tensions through the lens of conflict theory involves analyzing how religious identities are used to mobilize support and assert group interests (Adepeju-Fashina, 2023).

Political and Economic Conflicts

1. *Resource Control and Wealth Distribution:* The control of oil wealth has been a significant source of conflict, particularly in the Niger Delta region. Conflict theory highlights how the distribution of resources and economic benefits can exacerbate tensions between the federal government and local communities. Effective resolution requires addressing the structural issues of resource allocation and economic disparity (Owoeye & Ezeokoye, 2020).
2. *Political Power Struggles:* Nigerian politics is often characterized by intense power struggles and corruption. These struggles are explained by conflict theory as competing elites vie for control of the state apparatus to benefit their groups. Resolution strategies must therefore consider the political incentives and structures that perpetuate these power struggles (Olumuyiwa & Isaiah, 2023).

Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies

Applying conflict theory to conflict resolution in Nigeria involves several strategies:

1. *Transformative Mediation:* Focuses on empowering the conflicting parties and fostering mutual recognition and respect. This approach aligns with conflict theory by addressing power imbalances and encouraging meaningful dialogue (Nthontho, 2020).
2. *Structural Approaches:* These strategies aim to change the underlying structures that cause conflict. In Nigeria, this could involve reforms in resource distribution, political representation, and economic development policies (Onah et al., 2022).
3. *Community-Based Resolution:* Involving local communities and traditional leaders in conflict resolution can be effective, particularly in ethnically and religiously diverse societies. This approach respects local customs and provides a culturally relevant framework for resolving conflicts (Yimer, 2022).
4. *Hybrid Approaches:* Combining modern conflict resolution techniques with traditional practices can provide comprehensive solutions. This integration is crucial in societies where traditional systems still hold significant sway (Olademo et al., 2021).

Thus, conflict theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of conflict in societies like Nigeria. It emphasizes the importance of addressing power imbalances, structural inequalities, and diverse interests to achieve effective and lasting conflict resolution. Applying conflict theory to the Nigerian context, strategies can be developed that not only resolve conflicts but also promote sustainable peace and social progress.

Strategies for Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Several strategies are employed in conflict resolution and mediation counselling. These include:

- ◆ *Negotiation and Bargaining:* This strategy involves parties directly negotiating terms to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement. Effective negotiation requires clear communication, understanding of interests, and a willingness to compromise (Korobkin, 2024).
- ◆ *Conflict Coaching:* Conflict coaching is a one-on-one process where a coach helps an individual understand their conflict and develop strategies to manage it. This approach is particularly effective for personal development and empowering individuals to handle conflicts independently (Giacomini & Porter, 2023).
- ◆ *Facilitation and Dialogue:* Facilitation involves guiding discussions between conflicting parties to promote understanding and collaboration. It is often used in community or group settings where ongoing relationships are important (Folger et al., 2021).
- ◆ *Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:* Incorporating mindfulness techniques helps individuals manage their emotional responses to conflict. This strategy can reduce stress and promote a more balanced approach to conflict resolution (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020).
- ◆ *Conflict Mapping:* This technique involves creating a visual representation of the conflict, including key players, issues, and relationships. Conflict mapping helps parties gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved and identify potential solutions (Furlong, 2020).
- ◆ *Mediation Circles:* Mediation circles bring together all parties involved in a conflict to discuss the issue in a structured, facilitated setting. This method encourages open dialogue and collective problem-solving, often used in schools and community settings (Harmon-Darrow et al., 2020).

Comparative Analysis of Approaches and Outcomes

Different conflict resolution and mediation strategies offer unique advantages and face specific challenges. A comparative analysis reveals their relative effectiveness:

- ◆ *Dual Concern Theory vs. Social Constructionism:* Dual Concern Theory is particularly useful in workplace settings where balancing personal and organizational interests is crucial. It leads to pragmatic solutions that consider both self and others' concerns. Social Constructionism, on the other hand, is effective in more complex, relational conflicts, such as those in families or communities, where reshaping narratives can transform interactions (Ingram et al., 2019; Musenero et al., 2021).
- ◆ *Restorative Justice vs. Emotional Intelligence Theory:* Restorative justice is highly effective in contexts where repairing relationships and community harmony is paramount, such as in schools or criminal justice. Emotional Intelligence Theory is more applicable in personal or

professional settings where managing and understanding emotions can prevent conflicts from escalating (Wong & Gavrielides, 2019).

- ◆ *Negotiation and Bargaining vs. Conflict Coaching:* Negotiation is ideal for situations where clear agreements need to be reached, such as business or legal disputes. Conflict coaching is more suited for personal growth and empowering individuals to manage their conflicts, particularly in professional development settings (Malchanau et al., 2018).
- ◆ *Facilitation and Dialogue vs. Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:* Facilitation is crucial in group or community conflicts where ongoing relationships and collaboration are necessary. Mindfulness and stress reduction techniques are effective in individual conflicts where emotional regulation is key to resolving the issue (Folger et al., 2021).
- ◆ *Conflict Mapping vs. Mediation Circles:* Conflict mapping is useful for gaining a detailed understanding of complex disputes with multiple stakeholders, making it valuable in organizational or international conflicts. Mediation circles are more effective in community or educational settings where inclusive, collective problem-solving is required (Gray & Purdy, 2018).

Case Studies and Practical Outcomes

Practical applications of these strategies highlight their effectiveness in resolving different types of conflicts:

- ◆ *Organizational Conflict:* A corporate conflict between two departments over project responsibilities was addressed using the Dual Concern Theory. Focus on both departmental interests, the parties negotiated a compromise that balanced workload and responsibility, leading to improved interdepartmental cooperation (Folger et al., 2021).
- ◆ *Family Conflict:* In a case of ongoing family tension over care giving responsibilities, a social constructionist approach was employed. Assist the family members reframe their narratives and understand each other's perspectives, the counsellor facilitated a more empathetic and cooperative environment (Medved & Rawlins, 2011).
- ◆ *School Conflict:* A high school used restorative justice circles to address a series of bullying incidents. By involving students, parents, and staff in the dialogue, the school was able to repair relationships and create a more supportive community environment (Lodi et al., 2021).
- ◆ *Workplace Mediation:* Conflict coaching was used to help a manager navigate a contentious relationship with a team member. Through individual coaching sessions, the manager developed better communication and conflict management skills, leading to improved team dynamics (Raines, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is a pervasive issue in Nigeria, affecting various facets of society including

families, communities, workplaces, and even the political arena. Nigeria's diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural landscape often exacerbates tensions, leading to conflicts that can be both deep-rooted and widespread (Omotosho et al., 2020). Despite efforts to manage and resolve these conflicts, many persist or recur, indicating a need for more effective strategies. Counselling as a professional practice offers a range of strategies for conflict resolution and mediation, yet their effectiveness in the Nigerian context remains under-researched. The unique socio-cultural dynamics of Nigeria, such as communal living, extended family systems, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, may influence the success of these strategies. Hence, the integration of culturally sensitive approaches in counselling practices is often lacking, which can lead to suboptimal outcomes. Hence study examined effective strategies in counselling for conflict resolution and mediation in southwest Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to:

- Examine the Diversity of Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies in Nigeria
- Evaluate the Effectiveness of Different Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies
- Identify Opportunities for Integrating Traditional and Modern Approaches to Address Conflict Root Causes

Research Questions

- What are the most employed conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria, and how do they vary across different types of conflicts (e.g., ethnic, religious, political, and economic)?
- How do the outcomes of different conflict resolution and mediation strategies compare in terms of their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and sustaining peace in Nigeria?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of conflict resolution and mediation practices in Nigeria, particularly in integrating traditional and modern approaches to address the root causes of conflicts?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used, the population for this study includes a broad range of stakeholders involved in conflict resolution and mediation in southwest (Lagos and Ogun State) Nigeria. This encompasses: Community Leaders; Government Officials; Civil Society Organizations, Affected Communities, and Academics and Experts.

The sample size of 100 participants (50 individuals, 30 counsellors, 20 community leaders) were selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using researcher designed questionnaire named Counselling Strategies for Mediation and Conflict Resolution Questionnaire (COSMECRQ) from a diverse sample of conflict resolution practitioners, community leaders, and affected individuals across Nigeria. The items were

designed using a four-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from Strongly Disagree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Agree which has four (4) points. Cronbach Alpha was used to measure of internal consistency for the instrument and value of $r = 0.92$ was obtained. The data from the structured questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate mean and standard deviations.

Results

This study is concerned with effective strategies in counselling for conflict resolution and mediation: a Comparative study of approaches and outcomes.

Research Question One: What are the most employed conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria, and how do they vary across different types of conflicts?

Table 1: Diversity of Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	Remarks
1	Different conflict types in Nigeria (ethnic, religious, political, economic) require distinct conflict resolution strategies	3.2	0.75	Agreed
2	Traditional conflict resolution methods are still widely used in Nigerian communities	3.5	0.60	Agreed
3	Modern conflict resolution practices are often seen as more legitimate than traditional methods	2.8	0.85	Agreed
4	Community elders play a crucial role in resolving conflicts at the local level	3.6	0.55	Agreed
5	Government-led mediation efforts are more effective in resolving political conflicts	2.9	0.80	Agreed
6	NGOs and international organizations are vital in mediating religious conflicts in Nigeria	3.1	0.70	Agreed
7	Economic conflicts in Nigeria are best resolved through modern legal and negotiation frameworks	3.0	0.65	Agreed
8	Different regions in Nigeria prefer different conflict resolution approaches based on their cultural context	3.3	0.72	Agreed
Weighted Mean		3.2		

The overall mean value of **3.2** which is greater than the cut-off means of 2.5 indicated that analysis provides insights into participants' views on the diversity and application of conflict resolution strategies in Nigeria, revealing areas of consensus and divergence.

Research Question Two: How do the outcomes of different conflict resolution and mediation strategies compare in terms of their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and sustaining peace in Nigeria?

Table 2: Effectiveness of Different Conflict Resolution and Mediation Strategies

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	Remarks
1	Traditional conflict resolution methods are effective in achieving lasting peace in local disputes	3.4	0.62	Positive
2	Modern conflict resolution strategies are more effective in handling large-scale conflicts	3.1	0.68	Positive
3	Mediation by community elders leads to faster resolution of conflicts	3.5	0.58	Positive
4	Government-led interventions are effective in preventing the recurrence of conflicts	2.7	0.89	Positive
5	Conflict resolution strategies employed by NGOs are effective in addressing humanitarian aspects of conflicts	3.2	0.74	Positive
6	Economic conflicts are best resolved through strategies involving financial negotiations and settlements	3.3	0.67	Positive
7	Religious conflicts require mediation approaches that involve inter-faith dialogues and mutual respect	3.6	0.54	Positive
8	Conflicts resolved through hybrid approaches (traditional and modern) are more sustainable	3.4	0.60	Positive
Weighted Mean		3.3		

This provide insights into participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of various conflict resolution strategies in Nigeria, highlighting areas where traditional, modern approaches are seen as particularly effective.

Research Question Three: What recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of conflict resolution and mediation practices in Nigeria, particularly in integrating traditional and modern approaches to address the root causes of conflicts?

Table 3: Integrating Traditional and Modern Approaches to Address Conflict Root Causes

S/N	ITEMS	X	SD	Remarks
1	Integrating traditional and modern approaches can lead to more effective conflict resolution	3.5	0.63	Agreed
2	Community-based traditional practices should be recognized and incorporated into formal conflict resolution frameworks	3.4	0.68	Agreed
3	Modern conflict resolution techniques can benefit from the inclusion of cultural traditions and norms	3.3	0.66	Agreed
4	Training traditional leaders in modern mediation techniques can improve conflict resolution outcomes	3.6	0.58	Agreed
5	Conflict resolution efforts should address socio-economic and political root causes to be effective	3.7	0.55	Agreed
6	Combining local knowledge with formal mediation processes can enhance the legitimacy of conflict resolution outcomes	3.4	0.67	Agreed
7	Peace building initiatives should include elements of both traditional customs and modern peace education	3.5	0.64	Agreed
8	Policy frameworks should support the integration of traditional conflict resolution practices into national peace building strategies	3.3	0.69	Agreed
Weighted Mean		3.5		

This provide insights into participants' perceptions of the opportunities and challenges in integrating traditional and modern approaches to conflict resolution in Nigeria, highlighting areas where consensus exists and where further discussion or exploration may be needed.

Discussion of Findings

The finding emphasized on effective strategies in counselling for conflict resolution and mediation, Conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria are diverse and complex, reflecting the country's intricate social fabric and historical context. Nigeria, with its multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and socio-economically stratified society, adopts a range of strategies to address different types of conflicts: ethnic, religious, political, and economic.

Research question one was answered and collaborated with Jones (2020); Smith and Brown (2019) that effective conflict resolution and mediation strategies are essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing the escalation of disputes. Counselling plays a pivotal role in these processes by providing structured frameworks and therapeutic interventions that address the underlying issues causing conflicts. It has shown that well-implemented

counselling strategies can lead to significant improvements in communication, understanding, and emotional regulation among conflicting parties. It was agreed and supported by Yimer (2022) that involving local communities and traditional leaders in conflict resolution can be effective, particularly in ethnically and religiously diverse societies. This approach respects local customs and provides a culturally relevant framework for resolving conflicts.

Research question two, the effectiveness of conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria varies significantly across different contexts, conflict types, and localities. This analysis explores the comparative outcomes of these strategies in terms of their success in resolving conflicts and sustaining peace. It was supported and affirmed by Folger et al. (2021) that the outcomes of different conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria highlight the need for context-specific approaches. Traditional and community-based methods offer high effectiveness and sustainability for local conflicts, while institutional reforms and interfaith dialogue are crucial for broader, more systemic conflicts.

Research question three, in integrating traditional and modern approaches to address the root causes of conflicts. It was corroborated with the study of Olademo et al. (2021) that affirmed that combining modern conflict resolution techniques with traditional practices can provide comprehensive solutions. This integration is essential in societies where traditional systems still hold significant control.

Conclusion

This study focused on the effectiveness of various counselling strategies in conflict resolution and mediation. Nigeria adopts a range of conflict resolution and mediation strategies tailored to the specific nature of conflicts. While traditional and community-based approaches are prevalent in ethnic and religious conflicts, political and economic conflicts often require institutional and policy-driven solutions. The effectiveness of these strategies varies, and a multi-faceted approach that incorporates local knowledge, government intervention, and international support is essential for sustainable peace. The analysis of conflict resolution strategies in Nigeria highlights the importance of integrating traditional and modern approaches to address the diverse and complex nature of conflicts. Leverage the strengths of both systems, addressing root causes, and tailoring interventions to specific conflict types and regional contexts, Nigeria can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of its conflict resolution practices.

The outcomes of different conflict resolution and mediation strategies in Nigeria highlight the need for context-specific approaches. Traditional and community-based methods offer high effectiveness and sustainability for local conflicts, while institutional reforms and interfaith dialogue are necessary for broader, more systemic conflicts. A holistic approach that combines these strategies, tailored to the specific conflict type and context, is essential for achieving lasting peace in Nigeria. The success of these approaches depends on several factors, including the nature of the conflict, the willingness of parties to engage in the process, and the skill of the

mediator or counsellor. Effective communication, empathy, and a supportive environment are essential in facilitating resolution.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Training and Development:** Counsellors and mediators should receive comprehensive training in multiple conflict resolution strategies to effectively adapt their approach based on the unique dynamics of each situation.
- ◆ **Integration of Approaches:** Encourage practitioners to blend techniques from various methodologies, as this can provide a more holistic framework for resolving conflicts.
- ◆ **Promote Preventative Measures:** Encourage organizations and communities to adopt proactive conflict resolution training, equipping individuals with the skills needed to address conflicts before they escalate.

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EFFICACY OF SELF-CONTROL TECHNIQUE WITH RELAPSE PREVENTION THERAPY ON KLEPTOMANIA AMONG IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ABA EDUCATION ZONE, ABIA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy on kleptomania among in-school adolescents in Aba Education Zone, Abia State. The study adopted quasi-experimental design employing the pre-test, post-test, non-randomized control group design. Twenty-four in-school adolescents whose scores were high on Kleptomania Identification Questionnaire for Adolescents (KIQA) were purposively sampled from a population of 139 individuals exhibiting symptoms of kleptomania in the zone. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Kleptomania Identification Questionnaire for Adolescents (KIQA), developed by the researchers and validated by three experts with reliability index of .78 was used to collect data. Self-control techniques with relapse prevention therapy were intricately weaved around kleptomania features and exposed to those in the treatment group in eight sessions of 45 minutes each. The control group is a waitlist control group. Data were collected in three phases: pre-treatment, treatment, and follow-up periods. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results indicated that self-control with relapse prevention therapy reduced kleptomania behaviour among in-school adolescents at both posttest and follow-up periods. It was concluded that self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy could be effective in reducing kleptomania behaviour among in – school adolescents in the study area. It was recommended that school counsellors should utilize these behaviour modification techniques to help those students exhibiting kleptomania behaviour.

Keywords: Kleptomania, self-control techniques, relapse prevention therapy, in-school adolescents,

Introduction

Stealing is the act of taking what belongs to another person without the express permission or knowledge of the owner. Those who steal do so for various utilitarian purposes. However, some individuals steal what they may not need. This theft is called kleptomania (Nugraha, 2020). People with the behaviour are described as kleptomaniacs. This theft is not motivated by economic means but by lack of self-control due to compulsion interference and a sense of satisfaction when taking other people's goods that are not useful for the culprit and are of no economic value. Kleptomania is characterized by a diminished ability to resist recurrent impulses to steal objects that are not needed for their monetary or personal use. Team (2017) sees Kleptomania as a recurrent urge to steal that is motivated by more of an emotional need to steal, rather than a financial one. This is to say that kleptomaniacs who steal, do not steal because they need the items they take; in fact, the items they steal often do not even have much value.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) classifies Kleptomania as an impulse control disorder in which the essential feature is a recurrent urge to resist impulses to steal items even though those items are not needed for personal use or their monetary value (Criterion A). The individual experiences an increasing sense of tension just prior to the theft (Criterion B) and feels pleasure, gratification, or relief when committing the theft (Criterion C). The stealing is not committed to express anger or vengeance, is not done in response to a delusion or hallucination (Criterion D), and is not better accounted for by conduct disorder, a manic episode, or antisocial personality disorder (Criterion E). Kleptomania is defined by the feelings associated with the stealing, the urge to steal, a feeling of tension before stealing and a feeling of relief during or immediately afterwards. The individual frequently fears being apprehended and often feels depressed or guilty about the thefts. It often begins in adolescences but can occur among children and adults (Grant et al, 2016).

Kleptomania is an impulse control disorder (Asaoka et al., 2023) which can lead to significant distress, impairment in social or occupational functional and legal consequences if not treated. Kleptomaniacs often struggle with limited sense of self-control and experience an overwhelming urge to steal when presented with the opportunity, driven by impulsive thoughts or feelings that they struggle to control (Blum et al, 2018). This is why self-control technique will be effective in reducing kleptomania among in-school adolescents. Rihana et al. (2019) see kleptomania as being characterized by an anxiety-driven urge to perform an act that is pleasurable at the moment but causes identifiable distress and dysfunction.

Kleptomaniacs feel strong urges to steal with anxiety, tension and arousal leading to theft and feeling of pleasure and relief during the theft (Gotter & Gabbey, 2017). Kleptomania is quite a rare but a serious mental health disorder that can cause much emotional pain to one and loved ones if not treated. Kleptomania is difficult to overcome on your own. Without treatment, it may linger for a long time. The exact prevalence of kleptomania is not known but it is

estimated to impact approximately 1.2 million U.S adults or 6 out of every 1000 adult. Lifetime prevalence is as high as 0.3 to 0.6% of the general population (Cleveland, 2018). Because people may feel embarrassed or ashamed of their condition, the disorder is thought to be under-reported. National data assessing the general population does not exist, but numbers pulled from clinical samples suggest that kleptomania may be much more common than previously believed (Cherry & Gans, 2019). Additionally, the psychosocial effect of kleptomania are evident as it results to severe emotional, family, work, academic, legal and financial problems when left untreated. It is also associated with guilt, shame, self-loathing and humiliation and other complications and conditions include impulse-control disorders, such as compulsive gambling or shopping, alcohol and substance misuse, personality disorders, eating disorders, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and suicide (Sulthana et al., 2015, Carolyn & Kohn in El-Blomy, 2020). In the clinical characteristics perspective, it can emerge under stressful conditions or after an anger evoking event (Grant & Kim in El-Blomy, 2020).

With the manifested evidence of kleptomania above and the challenges associated with it, there is need to identify effective measures of control that could serve as therapy to reduce kleptomania in individuals. The present study identified therapies that could assist in such cases to include self-control with relapse prevention therapy. According to Grant and Odlaug in Blum (2018) kleptomania is a disabling disorder that results in intense shame, as well as legal, social, family and occupational problems if not treated. As such, large scale treatment studies are needed. This study adopted self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy as a therapeutic intervention to reduce kleptomania among in-school adolescents.

Self-control is a process through which an individual becomes the principal agent in guiding, directing or regulating those features of his own behaviour that might eventually lead to desired positive consequence (Obi, 2015). It is a systematic procedural approach involving mastery of specific techniques. Exercise of self-control is a conscious effort acquired through learning and practice (Moffit & Kern cited in Obi, 2015). Self-control can also be seen as a conscious attempt to gain mastery of a learnable normal behaviour in order to consciously unlearn abnormal behaviour. In the process of acquiring the tactics of self-control, the therapist encourages the client to apply his own resources in order to gain control of his own behaviour. This resilience enables the client to utilize his strengths to manage his life events proactively without relying on external help (Obi, 2015).

Utilizing self-control technique in behaviour modification involves a mastery of specific skills. The skills of self-control include self-monitoring, self-evaluation, orientation for change, behavioural contracts, modification of the environment, tasks and assignments and self-reinforcement. These techniques lay in a continuum and are intricately woven around the target behaviour to produce a comprehensive mechanism to achieve therapeutic change (Obi, 2021). Empirical evidence abound on the efficacy of self-control techniques. Ocheni (2021) found that self-control with relapse prevention therapy reduced smoking behaviour among undergraduates in Abia State. Again, Job et al. (2016) found that self-control techniques enhanced academic

performance of students. Hofmann et al. (2014) found that those exposed to self-control techniques reported high levels of psychosocial adjustment and less psychopathology. Duckworth & Seligman in Cherry (2021) found that students who exhibited greater self-control had better grades, higher test scores, and were more likely to be admitted to a competitive academic programme. Thus, self-control has been viewed as effective in curbing abnormal behaviour which may include kleptomania. Many compulsive/impulsive behaviour lend themselves to relapse.

Relapse prevention therapy was used with self-control technique as an adjunct therapy to maximize its effectiveness. According to Greenhalph, et al. (2016), relapse could be defined as an act or instance of backsliding or worsening. Relapse prevention therapy teaches people to recognize and manage the warning signs in maladaptive behaviours so that they can interrupt the progression early and return to the process of recovery. Relapse is a process, it is not an event. In order to understand relapse prevention, you have to understand the stages of relapse. Relapse starts weeks or even months before the event of physical relapse (Steven, 2015). There are three stages of relapse. The first stage is emotional relapse, mental relapse and physical relapse. Relapse prevention therapy acts to halt lapses that could lead to relapse.

Relapse Prevention Therapy (RPT) is a behavioural self-control programme that teaches individuals with addiction how to anticipate and cope with potential for relapse. RPT as an aftercare programme to sustain gains achieved during initial treatment. Coping skill training is the cornerstone of RPT. Teaching clients strategies to understand relapse as a process, identify and cope effectively with high-risk situations such as negative emotional states, interpersonal conflict, and social pressure; cope with urges and craving; implement damage control procedures during a lapse to minimize negative consequences; stay engaged in treatment even after a relapse and learn how to create a more balanced lifestyle (Hendershot et al., cited in Obi, 2015). Relapse prevention treatments show particular promise in three areas: reducing relapse severity, enhancing durability of treatment gains, and matching treatment strategies to client's characteristics. Relapse prevention therapy was found to be broadly efficacious (Sharma et al., 2021). This study, therefore, determined the effect of self-control with relapse prevention therapy on the reduction of kleptomania among in-school adolescents in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

Some adolescents compulsively steal items regardless of their value or need. This overwhelming urge to steal may persist resulting to a pattern of behaviour. The psychosocial effect of kleptomania are evident as it results to severe emotional, family, work, academic, legal and financial problems when left untreated. It is also associated with guilt, shame, self-loathing and humiliation. The subsequent feelings of guilt, shame and anxiety after initial euphoria is a source of concern to the kleptomaniac. If left untreated, it may lead to severe distress and negative consequences on the psychological, social and educational life of the sufferers, causing

destructive social crimes affecting the entire society. Many adolescents who are kleptomaniacs seem helpless either for poor understanding on the nature of their problem or poor education on how to get help in overcoming the problem. Despite efforts by parents and schools to reduce this behaviour, it has persisted. There is need for psychological intervention that will assist the kleptomaniacs to improve self-control and reduce the frequency of stealing episodes. This study therefore utilized self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy to reduce Kleptomania among in-school adolescent in Aba Education Zone, Abia State.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect self-control technique as a behavioural intervention with relapse prevention therapy as an adjunct therapy on kleptomania among in - school adolescents. Specifically, the study determined:

- the effect of self-control with relapse prevention therapy on the reduction of Kleptomania among in-school adolescents when compared with the control group at post test.
- the effect of self-control with relapse prevention therapy on the reduction of Kleptomania among in-school adolescents when compared with the control group at follow-up.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study have both practical and theoretical significance. If published, it will be beneficial to the the kleptomaniacs, guidance counsellors, parents, school system and the society. The findings will, as well, authenticate the major theories underpinning this study.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study thus:

- What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania between in-school adolescents in the self-control with relapse prevention therapy and control at posttest period?
- What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania between in-school adolescents in the self-control with relapse prevention therapy and control at follow-up period?

Hypotheses

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

- HO₁:** There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania behaviour between those in the self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy group and control group at post-test period.
- HO₂:**There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania behaviour between those in the self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy group and control group at follow-up period.

Methodology

This section highlighted the procedures that were adopted in carrying out the study. The study adopted quasi-experimental design employing the pre-test, post-test, non-randomized control group design. Quasi-experimental design was therefore suitable for this study in that it enabled the researcher to examine the effectiveness of self-control with relapse prevention therapy on reduction of kleptomania among in-school adolescents in Aba Education Zone of Abia State. The population was 239 SS2 students in public and private senior secondary schools in Aba Education zone with symptoms of kleptomania.

The sample size of the study comprised 24 in-school adolescents identified as kleptomaniacs whose scores on the instrument were high. They were purposively sampled from the population. The Kleptomania Identification Questionnaire for Adolescents (KIQA) used for the study was validated by three experts; two in Guidance and counselling and one in Measurement and evaluation all from College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method after two weeks interval by administering KIQA on 20 kleptomaniacs from Imo State which is outside the study area but with similar characteristics. The KIQA was reshuffled and re-administered on the same subjects after the two weeks. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used in computing the data collected and a reliability index of 0.78 which is considered high enough was obtained. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using cronbach Alpha method which yielded an index of 0.83.

The study adopted a systematic procedure for data collection. Self-control techniques with relapse prevention therapy were intricately weaved around kleptomania features and exposed to those in the treatment group in eight sessions of 45 minutes each. The control group is a waitlist control group. Using Kleptomania Identification Questionnaire for Adolescents (KIQA), data were collected in three phases- pre-treatment phase, post-treatment phase and follow-up phase. The pre-treatment phase involved pre-treatment assessment to get the baseline data using the KIQA for all the groups. Post-treatment phase involved getting data from all the groups a week after the treatment while follow-up phase involved assessment using KIQA after a one month period from all the groups. The data collected were statistically analyzed. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions, while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to analyze the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1

What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania between in-school adolescents in the self-control with relapse prevention therapy and control at posttest period?

Table 1: Pretest-Posttest Mean and Standard Deviation of Reduction of Kleptomania between In-School Adolescents in the Self-Control with Relapse Prevention Therapy and Control at posttest period

Groups	Pretest			Posttest		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction Difference
	N	X	SD	X	SD		
SCT+RPT	12	3.18	0.31	1.20	0.55	1.98	1.89
Control	12	3.10	0.66	3.01	0.44	0.09	

Data in Table 1 show that subjects exposed to self-control with relapse prevention therapy (SCT+RPT) had a pre-test mean score of 3.18 with a standard deviation of .31 and a post-test mean score of 1.20 with a standard deviation of 0.55. Similarly, the subjects in the control group recorded pre-test mean score of 3.10 with a standard deviation of 0.66 and a post-test mean score of 3.01 with a standard deviation of 0.44. The table further showed that the in-school adolescents exposed to self-control with relapse prevention therapy (SCT+RPT) had mean reduction difference of 1.98 while their counterparts in the control group had 0.09. The mean reduction difference between the self-control with relapse prevention therapy (SCT+RPT) and the control group is 1.89; which implies that the subjects exposed to self-control with relapse prevention therapy (SCT+RPT) had higher mean reduction rate than their counterparts in the control group.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania behaviour between those in the self-control technique with relapse prevention therapy group and control at post-test period.

Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on Kleptomania Behaviour Reduction of In-School Adolescents Exposed to Self-control with Relapse Prevention Therapy and the Control Group at posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7778.422 ^a	2	3889.211	16.766	.000
Intercept	5361.536	1	5361.536	23.113	.000
Pretest	3149.339	1	3149.339	13.576	.001
Groups	4462.034	1	4462.034	19.235	.008
Error	4175.453	22	231.970		
Total	78934.000	24			
Corrected Total	13953.875	23			

The results in Table 2 shows that self-control with relapse prevention therapy has a significant effect on the rate of reduction of kleptomania behaviour of the in-school adolescents. The calculated f-value of 19.235 is higher with degree of freedom of 22 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that exposing in-school adolescents with kleptomania to self-control with relapse prevention therapy significantly reduced their kleptomania behaviour. Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania between those in the self-control with relapse prevention therapy group and control at post-test period is rejected.

Research Question 2

What is the mean score difference in the rate of reduction of kleptomania between those in SCT/RPT and control at follow-up?

Table 3: Post-test and follow-up Mean and Standard Deviation of rate of Reduction of kleptomania Among In-school Adolescents exposed to Self-Control with Relapse Prevention Therapy and Control Group at Follow-up period

Groups	Posttest			Follow-up		Mean Reduction	Mean Reduction Difference
	N	X	SD	X	SD		
SCT+RPT	12	1.20	0.55	1.70	0.43	0.5	0.39
Control	12	3.01	0.44	2.90	0.28	0.11	

Data in Table 3 show that the in-school adolescents having kleptomania that were exposed to SCT/RPT had a post-test mean score of 1.20 with a standard deviation of 0.55 and a follow-up mean score of 1.70 with a standard deviation of 0.43. Similarly, in-school adolescents in the control group recorded posttest mean score of 3.01 with a standard deviation of 0.44 and a follow-up mean score of 2.90 with a standard deviation of 0.28. The table further showed that the in-school adolescents exposed to SCT/RPT had mean reduction difference of 0.5 while their counterparts in the control group had 0.11. The mean reduction difference between the SCT/RPT and control groups is 0.39. The results therefore, indicated that the treatment gains were maintained after one month follow-up period.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant mean score difference on the rate of reduction of kleptomania between those in SCT/RPT and control group at follow-up period.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) on the rate of reduction of Kleptomania among In-school Adolescents exposed to Self-Control with Relapse Prevention Therapy and Control Group at Follow-up period.

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Corrected model	4626.493 ^a	2	2313.247	5.053	.001
Intercept	11282.717	1	11282.717	24.644	.000
Post-test	4611.434	1	4611.434	10.072	.000
Treatment	542.471	1	542.471	1.185	.073
Error	587.837	22	457.835		
Total	214032.000	24			
Corrected Total	22091.077	23			

The results in Table 4 show that SCT+RPT had a significant effect on the rate of reduction of kleptomania among in-school adolescents even after one month follow-up period. The calculated f-value of 1.185 in respect of the difference in the treatments of SCT+RPT on kleptomania after one month follow-up period is higher with degree of freedom of 22 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that exposing in-school adolescents with kleptomania to SCT with RPT significantly reduced their kleptomania showing that the treatment gains were maintained after one month follow-up period. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant mean score difference on the rate of reduction of kleptomania between those in SCT/RPT and control group at follow-up period is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that SCT +RPT effectively reduced kleptomania among in-school adolescents in Aba education zone of Abia State. The treatment gains were also maintained after one month follow-up period. This finding corroborates the findings of Ocheni (2021) who found that self-control with relapse prevention therapy was effective in reducing smoking behaviour among undergraduates in Abia State. As postulated by Obi (2021), Self-control technique can handle a wide range of behaviour problems especially those bordering on addiction and impulsivity like kleptomania. The reduction in kleptomania behaviour especially in the Self-control with relapse prevention technique can be attributed to the mastery and application of the skills exposed to them in therapy. The addition of relapse prevention therapy maximized its effectiveness as shown by the follow-up scores. Studies show that self-control techniques used with relapse prevention therapy can assist adolescents to control their impulses and help in reducing maladaptive behaviour including kleptomania. Early identification and treatment of kleptomania in adolescents can help prevent the disorder from becoming problematic in future. This underscores the need for this study.

Conclusion

The findings indicated substantial reductions of kleptomania among those exposed to SCT with RPT than those in the control group. The gains after therapy were also maintained at one month follow-up. It can, therefore be concluded that self-control with relapse prevention therapy have the potential to assist kleptomaniacs reduce impulsive stealing behaviour. Specifically, self-control with relapse prevention therapy (SCT+RPT) demonstrated effectiveness in reducing kleptomania proving to be particularly impactful in achieving sustained reductions even after a one month follow-up period. These results emphasize the importance of implementing targeted interventions to address kleptomania among adolescents, highlighting the potential for meaningful and sustained therapeutic outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. It was recommended that school counsellors utilize these specific therapeutic interventions to effectively modify kleptomania behaviour among referred students.
2. Governmental initiatives should be undertaken to organize and sponsor workshops, seminars, and conferences aimed at educating teachers, school guidance counsellors, and parents on the efficacy of SCT+RPT in reducing kleptomania among students, and the need for them to refer adolescents found to engage in impulsive stealing for counselling.
3. This intervention strategy could as well be utilized to assist the political class that steal public funds that they and even their extended family members could not finish within their life time to change.
4. Considering the vital role of SCT as well as the need to incorporate RPT, counsellor educators should emphasize the training of student- counsellors on the application of SCT and RPT in behaviour modification.

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION COMPETENCE AMONG TRAINEE COUNSELLORS IN NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY KEFFI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article focused on Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Conflict Resolution Competence among Trainee Counsellors in Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria. The study is a descriptive survey. Two research questions were answered and hypothesis tested at 0.05 significance level. The total of fifty (50) postgraduate students in Nasarawa State University Keffi, constituted the population for the study. The entire population (25 males and 25 females) formed the sample for the study since it is not large to handle. An instrument titled; Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Competence Scale (EICRCS) was adapted and used for data collection. Its validity was 0.76 while reliability index was $\alpha = 0.81$ by Chronbach alpha. Inferential statistics was used. Findings revealed positive correlation between EI and conflict resolution competence, underscoring emotional intelligence as major competence in counselling practice. Thus, the study recommended that counsellor training programmes should emphasise developing emotional intelligence as a core competency, enabling counsellors to better manage their emotions and that of their clients hence, leading to improved conflict resolution and good therapeutic results.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution Competence, Trainee-Counsellors

Introduction

It is increasingly an indisputable truth that counsellors are indispensable in handling and resolving emotional difficulties such as conflict either involving them or other people in the society. The ability to handle or resolve conflict is however not automatic but could require trainee-counsellors to be intentional in practicing and developing such competences to stand proper chances of being helpful to self and the society. This becomes feasible when Counsellors are emotionally intelligent, as that is a tool for managing their own emotions, those of others, and displaying adaptive behaviours for directing their clients, whoever they may be.

Conflict could be a disagreement or clash between two or more parties who have incompatible goals, needs, or values. In the current complex world where conflicts abound and the struggles to tackling them become aptly necessary, emotional intelligence is assumed to serve as double-edged sword in resolving conflicts on one hand, at the same time avails counsellors the opportunities for personal growth and understanding. Conflicts arise in different forms, usually stemming from differences in perspectives, priorities and values, with underlying emotional triggers i.e., core issues that resonate personally with those involved (Mataac, 2023). This article focuses on understanding the conflict resolution competence among counsellors in relation to their emotional intelligence.

People have different styles they adopt in resolving conflicts. According to Huan and Yazdanifard (2012), conflict resolution strategies are the patterns of behaviour that people display when faced with conflicts. Some of the strategies include; collaboration, competition, compromising, avoidance, and accommodating (Shkēmbi & Treska, 2024). Several research evidence proof that emotional intelligence and conflict resolution are significantly related however, emotionally intelligent persons could any resolution styles depending on the trigger (Olderbak et al., 2018). This study however looks at conflict resolution as a whole and not categorized as mentioned earlier.

Tripathi (2016), sees emotional intelligence as competencies with which one responds to situations. It is useful in professional relationships, helps individuals navigate social interactions, resolve conflicts and make better decisions (Mafuzah, 2016). As opined by Serrat (2017), an emotionally intelligent person assesses personal strengths and weakness as well as those of other people. It could be inferred therefore that being emotionally intelligent brings about benefits such as better decision-making abilities, and better interpersonal relationships among others. These are very important skill set required of professional and trainee-counsellors especially in conflict resolution whether at personal, family, or societal levels in Nigeria and even globally.

Emotional intelligence can greatly advance counsellors' professional capabilities. It requires mastering different domains of emotional intelligence which Singh, Devi and Dev (2023) said include the ability to be; aware of self, self-regulating, self-motivating, empathic, and managing interpersonal relationships.

Self-awareness according to Mataac (2023), means knowing personal emotional strengths and weaknesses. Such knowledge enables people to set realistic goals and develop effective strategies for personal growth and development. With self-awareness skill, it could be insinuated that counsellors at all levels should experience; increase self-confidence, improved interpersonal relationships and overall wellbeing in professional practice. Individuals with high level of self-awareness are knowledgeable about and comfortable discussing their strengths and limitations, often expressing the desire for constructive feedback (Goleman, 2011).

Self-regulation or Self-management on the other hand involves establishing fair atmosphere by controlling self and others so as to achieve desired goals. Iwanna (2024) defined self-regulation as the capacity to manage emotion effectively without suppressing or ignoring personal feelings and those of others, but understanding, controlling and channeling them in healthy and productive way. A self-regulated person should be able to manage stress and other challenging emotions, express emotion in a constructive and appropriate way, and also avoid outburst and depression.

Another domain of emotional intelligence is Motivation. Mehta and Singh (2013) defined motivation as being free from interference. Self-motivated individuals are able to singlehandedly execute tasks successfully no matter the circumstances. They are resilient in setting and working towards goals with energy and self-driven enthusiasm, thereby transforming aspirations into tangible reality despite obstacles. Self-motivated counsellors most possibly to discharge their duties without feeling hindered by any circumstance.

The domain of empathy is the ability to share and be sensitivity to their feelings and responding compassionately with understanding. Kasik and Kumcağiz (2014) explained it as feeling with understanding, what others are going through. Possessing this skill will help counsellors to see things not just from their own perspective but also that of others hence, arriving at a more informed decision in the interest of those concerned.

The last domain has to do with social skills/relationships. People with social skills communicate excellently, build healthy relationships, and manage disputes effectively (Mehta & Singh, 2013). Counsellors should know to relate well with people because social skill is practically an exemplary and exceptional demonstration of the leader and counsellor that the world is looking for.

The measure of counsellors' level of emotional intelligence (high or low) therefore is the sum of his/her overall competence in manifesting suitable and effective outcomes. Hatice, Fatma, and Neslihan (2017) are of the opinion that counsellors would be considered emotionally intelligent if they recognise their emotional strengths and weaknesses. This determines the quality of services that counsellors are able to render in real life. Certainly, emotional intelligence is an indispensable quality that distinguishes good and exceptional counsellors because they are able to overcome challenges, and build strong relationship with people, and coaching those in similar situation.

High emotional intelligence levels are assumed to empower people to notice emotions in other people's speech, disposition or actions, and using the understanding in managing emotional and social problems as the case may be. Emotional intelligence is associated with higher professional successes (Sony & Mekoth, 2016), and show effective leadership styles (Edelman & Van Knippenberg, 2018). It also sets standards for conflict resolution (Shkēmbi & Treska, 2024), with it, counsellors are most likely to be effective in their professional conduct and practice.

Some researches revealed that the level of emotional intelligence in females is great than that of males (Patel, 2017), this is not consistent always as some studies may result in contrary outcomes (Naghavi & Redzuan, 2011; Rao & Komala, 2017). Similarly, Ali et al (2021) on comparison of emotional intelligence among university students revealed that males were highly emotionally intelligent than their female counterparts. On the contrary however, Shehzad and Mahmood (2013) observed that girls are perceived more emotionally sensitive than boys. Research conducted in Tamil Nadu, India, had female medical graduates being more emotionally intelligent (Chandra et al., 2017), and a similar trend was observed among Sri Lankan medical undergraduates, where females' mean scores on emotional intelligence were higher (Ranasinghe et al., 2017). In Delhi, among 10th graders, similar outcome was recorded about males and females (Joshi & Dutta, 2014). Interestingly, Amico and Geraci (2022) found no gender disparities in self-assessment, suggesting that boys and girls are equally adept at accurately assessing their own performance.

Emotional intelligence is said to set the standards for effective conflict management (Shkēmbi & Treska, 2024), this presumably even among counsellors in conflict resolution attempts. Significant relationship is revealed to exist between emotional intelligence level and effective conflict resolution (Kumari, 2015). A study conducted by Gnawali, (2016) on Conflict resolution and emotional intelligence among higher education students revealed that the relationship between self-awareness and conflict resolution is low. Notwithstanding, Shkēmbi and Treska (2024) are of the opinion that conflicts could be resolved if people learn to be emotionally intelligent because it is lack of it that affects conflict resolution competence. This article is therefore geared towards finding out whether or not trainee-counsellors are emotionally intelligent, and are competent in conflict resolution as they progress in their professional training because they are necessary for positive impact.

Statement of the Problem

Counsellors are presumed to be role models in many instances by the professional roles they play in the society. Aware of this general mind-set and expectations, counsellors may feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to control themselves emotionally even in the midst of unpleasant situations. Counsellors are able to successfully control self only if they understand, manage, and control their emotions including those of others, especially in the face of provocation like conflicts. Conflict is a state of disharmony between two people or group of

persons. Counsellors are sometimes seen as leaders, hence, the researchers presume that highly emotionally intelligent counsellors should have good conflict resolution competence with which to handle any situation that may arise whether involving self or other people in the society. It is based on this expectation that the researchers investigated the emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competence of trainee-counsellors in Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study was geared towards finding out;

- (a) extent that trainee-counsellors are emotionally intelligent
- (b) gender difference in emotional intelligence among trainee counsellors
- (c) relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competence among trainee-counsellors

Research Questions

These research questions guided the study:

- (a) How emotionally intelligent are trainee-counsellors?
- (b) What is the gender difference in emotional intelligence level among respondents?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competence among trainee-counsellors in Nasarawa State.

Methodology

This study is a Quantitative survey. A total of 50 postgraduate students (25 males and 25 females) of Nasarawa State University Keffi formed the population of the study. All 50 were randomly and conveniently considered as sample. Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution Competence Scale (EICRCS) was adapted for data collection. It is a four-point scale with two parts. Part A elicited demographic characteristics of research participants and part B consists statements testing EI level of respondents (40 items), as well as conflict resolution competence (5 items) with responses rated from Always=4, Sometimes=3, Rarely=2, and Not at all=1. The validity is 0.76, while the coefficient of reliability obtained using Cronbach Alpha is $\alpha=0.81$.

Inferential statistics was employed. While mean score 2.50 was used as the bench mark for determining the EI level of participants, the value of 0.50 was used as a bench mark for determining correlation coefficient of variables where values below the bench mark are considered low and those above high.

Results

Research Question One: How emotionally intelligent are trainee-counsellors?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the level of Emotionally Intelligence among respondents

Indices of EI	N	%	Mean	Std 6	Decision
Awareness skill	50	86%	3.42	2.97	HE
Social skill		81%	3.26	3.70	HE
Self-Management		74%	2.97	4.35	HE
Relationship skill		85%	3.41	3.02	HE
Aggregate Score		82%	3.27	3.51	HE

Scale: 1.00 – 1.49VLE, 1.50 -2.49LE, **2.50** – 3.49 HE, 3.50 – 5.00VHE

Table 1 revealed that respondents scored an aggregate mean of 3.27 and standard deviation of 3.51, indicating that trainee-counsellors in Nasarawa State are emotionally intelligent to a high extent.

Research Question 2: What is the gender difference in EI level among respondents?

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the difference in EI between Male & Female Respondents

Indices of EI	N	%	Male 6			Female 6		
					Dec.	%		Dec.
Self-Awareness	50	84%	3.37	1.98	HE	87%	3.47	3.66 HE
Social Awareness		81%	3.24	4.13	HE	82%	3.27	3.30 HE
Self-Management		73%	2.92	4.17	HE	76%	3.02	4.56 HE
Relationship Man.		86%	3.45	2.25	HE	85%	3.39	3.60 HE
Aggregate Score			3.25	3.13	HE		3.27	3.78 HE

Scale: 2.50

Table 2 showed that both male and female trainee counsellors had high level of EI in different domains. However, the females had a slightly higher mean aggregate of 3.29 and standard deviation of 3.78, above their male counterparts who had mean aggregate of 3.25 and standard deviation of 3.13. Female participants ranked a bit higher than their male counterparts in all domains of EI, while male participants scored slightly top of their female counterparts only in relationship management domain with mean scores of 3.45 and 3.39 respectively.

Hypothesis

H0₁: There is no significant Relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution competence among trainee-counsellors

Table 3: Pearson Moment Correlation between EI and Conflict Resolution Competence

Variable	Emotional Intelligence	Conflict Resolution competence	
Emotional Intelligence	PPMC	1	.921**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	50	
Conflict Resolution competence	PPMC	.921**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	50	

** . Significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In table 3, the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution competence among respondents is $r = 0.921$. This shows very high positive association between EI and Conflict Resolution competence.

Discussion of Findings

First, the study found that trainee-counsellors in Nasarawa State University Keffi are highly emotionally intelligent across all domains. With an aggregate mean score of 3.27, respondents showed strong capacity understanding their strength and weaknesses including those of others This finding aligns with existing literature that highlights emotional intelligence as a vital skill in counselling (Serrat, 2017). For counsellors, managing emotions is crucial in helping clients navigate their own emotional challenges. High emotional intelligence enables counsellors to maintain emotional stability and objectivity in emotionally charged situations, which is essential for providing effective therapeutic interventions (Carkhuff, 2009). Furthermore, the result supports previous research that suggests that trainee counsellors, particularly those undergoing professional development, are likely to develop a heightened sense of emotional awareness and regulation (Beck, 2011).

Secondly, this study revealed that the EI levels of male and female trainee counsellors are not different. Both male and female respondents exhibited high emotional intelligence, with women scoring marginally higher in self-awareness, social awareness, and self-management, while men scored slightly higher in relationship management. This is consistent with some prior studies that found no consistent pattern of EI superiority in either gender (Rao & Komala, 2017). While some research indicates that women may generally score higher on empathy and social skills (Chandra et al., 2017), other studies found men to be equally adept in areas such as self-awareness and regulation (Ali et al., 2021). The current finding suggests that emotional

intelligence could be a function of other factors like professional training and personal development, rather than gender alone. This result also challenges traditional gender stereotypes and emphasizes the need to focus on individual emotional competence rather than relying on generalized assumptions about gender differences.

The third finding revealed strong positive association ($r=0.921$) among EI and conflict resolution competence among trainee-counsellors. This finding indicates that as emotional intelligence increases, so does the ability to effectively manage and resolve conflicts. Emotional intelligence enhances conflict resolution competence in individuals, helping them to navigate challenges successfully. The finding aligns with Gnawali (2016) that Self-awareness allows counsellors to recognize their own emotional triggers, helping them remain calm and composed during conflicts. It similarly supports Kasik and Kumcağiz (2014) who hold that empathy enables counsellors to understand the perspectives and emotions of others, facilitating more compassionate and constructive conflict resolution. Additionally, emotionally intelligent counsellors are understood to manage their own emotions effectively, reducing the likelihood of personal conflicts in professional settings (Nwachukwu, 2017).

Implication for Counselling Practice

Emotional intelligence is no doubt paramount in counsellor-education/training and practice. Incorporating EI training into counsellor education helps counsellors better understand their strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others hence equipped to manage and resolve conflict competently. Additionally, the lack of significant gender differences in EI underscores the importance of providing equal opportunities for all trainees to build emotional competence through experiential learning and reflective practice. Given the prevalence of interpersonal conflicts in counselling, integrating conflict resolution competence through workshops and role-playing exercises will better equip counsellors to handle emotionally charged situations with compassion and effectiveness.

Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a viable tool that trainee- counsellors need to deliberately develop as they train because it will set them on effective path in counselling practice especially in terms of conflict resolution.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend that;

- Counsellor training programmes should emphasize developing emotional intelligence as a core competence requirement to enable trainee-counsellors opportunity to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and those of others as bases for effective conflict resolution
- Counsellor educators should provide equal opportunities for all trainees, regardless of gender, to develop emotional intelligence through experiential learning, reflective practice, and emotional awareness exercises, promoting emotional competence across the

board.

- Counsellor-educations programmes should incorporate conflict resolution competence through avenues like workshops, simulations, and role-playing exercises, enabling counsellors to effectively manage conflicts in emotionally charged situations and provide compassionate support to clients.

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ROLE OF TRAUMA COUNSELLING IN SUPPORTING POLICEMEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper delves into the crucial role of trauma counselling in providing psychological support to policemen in Nigeria. This profession is inherently stressful and often exposes officers to traumatic events that can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and overall well-being. Policing involves high-stress situations such as exposure to violent crime, accidents, and critical incidents, which can lead to emotional and psychological challenges, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. In Nigeria, these challenges are compounded by limited resources, inadequate mental health infrastructure, and societal stigma surrounding mental health care. The paper discusses the unique challenges faced by Nigerian policemen, including the underreporting of mental health issues due to fear of judgment or career repercussions, lack of access to professional support, and the general culture of resilience that often discourages officers from seeking help. It examines how these factors contribute to the mental health crisis within the Nigerian police force and the broader implications for their personal well-being, job performance, and interactions with the public. By reviewing existing literature and case studies from both Nigerian and global contexts, the paper highlights the importance of implementing effective trauma counselling programmes that are tailored to the specific needs of law enforcement officers. It explores best practices in trauma counselling, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), peer support networks, and specialized mental health services that can help address the psychological impacts of policing. Furthermore, the paper offers recommendations for improving mental health support for policemen in Nigeria, such as incorporating mental health awareness into police training, providing accessible and confidential counselling services, and fostering a culture of mental well-being within the police force. By addressing the psychological needs of policemen, the paper advocates for a holistic approach to law enforcement that not only focuses on public safety but also prioritizes the mental health of those who serve in this demanding profession.

Keyword: Trauma, Counselling, Policemen and Psychological health

Introduction

The mental well-being of police officers is a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of law enforcement in Nigeria. The demanding nature of policing exposes officers to high-stress situations, traumatic incidents, and conflicts, significantly impacting their psychological health (Violanti & Aron, 2017). Given the challenges of the profession, there is a growing need to recognize and address the mental health concerns of police personnel through structured

support mechanisms.

Trauma Counselling has emerged as a vital intervention for individuals dealing with psychological distress resulting from exposure to traumatic events. Increasing awareness of the psychological toll of policing has emphasized the importance of specialized trauma Counselling services. Research indicates that trauma Counselling can help mitigate the effects of trauma, strengthen emotional resilience, and promote overall psychological well-being (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2020).

Like their counterparts worldwide, Nigerian police officers frequently encounter distressing experiences such as violent crime scenes, accidents, and interpersonal conflicts. These encounters heighten the risk of mental health challenges, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and occupational burnout (Papazoglou & Andersen, 2017). Despite these risks, the culture within law enforcement often discourages officers from seeking psychological help, further exacerbating their struggles (Violanti & Aron, 2017).

Trauma Counselling provides a structured approach to managing the psychological impact of traumatic experiences. It employs various therapeutic techniques to help individuals process and cope with trauma. For police officers, Counselling sessions offer a confidential and supportive environment where they can discuss their experiences, develop effective coping mechanisms, and build resilience (Abimbola, 2021). In Nigeria, where mental health services are often underdeveloped, integrating trauma Counselling into police support systems could significantly enhance the psychological well-being of officers.

Moreover, the Nigerian police force operates under unique pressures, including limited resources, high crime rates, and societal expectations. These stressors compound the mental health burden faced by officers, underscoring the necessity for targeted psychological interventions (Adeyemi, 2019). While there is increasing recognition of the need for mental health support within law enforcement, the implementation of trauma Counselling as a routine practice remains a work in progress.

This paper aims to examine the role of trauma Counselling in supporting the mental health of Nigerian police officers. It will assess the availability and effectiveness of existing trauma Counselling services and propose strategies to improve access and implementation. By highlighting the significance of psychological support in law enforcement, this study seeks to contribute to the broader conversation on mental health in Nigeria's policing system and offer practical recommendations for strengthening support services.

Unique Challenges Faced by Nigerian Policemen

The Nigerian police force encounters numerous obstacles that affect its efficiency, professionalism, and overall operational effectiveness. These challenges arise from various factors, including socio-economic conditions, institutional weaknesses, and operational limitations.

Socio-Economic Factors*Low Salaries and Poor Working Conditions:*

A major issue affecting Nigerian police officers is inadequate pay and unfavorable working conditions. Despite the demanding nature of their job, many officers earn wages that do not reflect the risks and responsibilities they bear. This financial hardship often leads to low morale and a higher tendency toward corrupt practices. Additionally, many officers lack the necessary resources and training to cope with the traumatic situations they encounter, which worsens their stress and emotional burden.

Rising Cost of Living:

The increasing cost of living in Nigeria further exacerbates the financial strain on police officers. With inflation affecting the prices of essential goods and services, many officers struggle to meet their basic needs. This financial pressure affects their job performance and overall job satisfaction.

Institutional Challenges*Corruption and Poor Management:*

Corruption remains a significant problem within the Nigerian police force. The misallocation of funds and resources leads to inefficiencies and diminishes public trust in law enforcement. The presence of corrupt practices weakens the integrity of the force and hinders efforts to combat crime effectively.

Insufficient Training and Equipment:

Many officers face challenges due to inadequate training and a lack of essential tools. Limited access to modern technology and advanced policing methods restricts their ability to perform their duties efficiently. Moreover, outdated training programs leave officers unprepared to address emerging security threats and sophisticated criminal activities.

Bureaucratic Delays:

The police force in Nigeria operates within a rigid bureaucratic system that slows down decision-making and disrupts operational efficiency. Hierarchical structures often result in delays in implementing policies that could enhance security and policing effectiveness.

Operational Challenges*Threats to Safety and Security:*

Police officers in Nigeria frequently confront direct dangers from violent criminals, insurgents, and terrorist organizations. Regions affected by armed conflicts and insurgency expose officers to significant risks, making it difficult for them to maintain law and order. Encounters with armed groups and involvement in violent incidents often lead to both physical harm and psychological trauma.

Public Distrust and Negative Perception:

A poor public perception of the Nigerian police force, often fueled by cases of police misconduct and corruption, weakens police-community relations. Lack of public trust makes collaboration between law enforcement and citizens more challenging, thereby hindering crime prevention efforts. When the public perceives the police as corrupt or ineffective, officers experience increased stress and diminished support from the communities they serve.

Political Influence:

Political interference in law enforcement operations undermines the independence and effectiveness of the police. In some cases, politicians manipulate police activities to serve personal or partisan interests, leading to biased law enforcement practices and reduced accountability.

Police officers frequently experience high levels of stress due to the dangerous nature of their job. They are often exposed to violent incidents, accidents, and other traumatic events, which can take a toll on their mental health. Studies indicate that prolonged exposure to such situations can contribute to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. Addressing these challenges is essential for improving the well-being of Nigerian police officers and enhancing the overall effectiveness of law enforcement in the country.

Psychological Effects of Trauma

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Police officers face a heightened risk of PTSD due to repeated exposure to traumatic events. Research indicates that PTSD prevalence among law enforcement officers is significantly higher than in the general population. According to the National Center for PTSD (2022), common symptoms include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety.

Depression: The stress and trauma associated with police work can contribute to depression. A meta-analysis by Ménard and Arter (2013) found that a substantial number of police officers experience depressive symptoms, including persistent sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, and chronic fatigue.

Anxiety: Anxiety disorders are also prevalent among police officers, often exacerbated by the high-risk and stressful nature of their job. White et al. (2018) highlight that officers may develop conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks, and heightened stress responses due to prolonged exposure to dangerous situations.

Mental health challenges arising from trauma can have a significant impact on job performance. Officers struggling with PTSD, depression, or anxiety may experience difficulties in decision-making, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and effectively carrying out their duties. McCraty et al. (2018) found that trauma-related stress can impair cognitive functioning and decrease overall job performance among law enforcement professionals.

Importance of Trauma Counselling

Trauma Counselling is essential in addressing the psychological and emotional impact of traumatic experiences. Trauma is commonly understood as an emotional response to distressing events, which can significantly affect an individual's mental and physical well-being. The primary goal of trauma Counselling is to help individuals process their experiences, heal from psychological distress, and develop coping mechanisms to manage symptoms and improve their quality of life.

Trauma can stem from various sources, such as physical or emotional abuse, natural disasters, accidents, or exposure to violence. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2020) emphasizes that trauma is not solely defined by the event itself but also by how an individual perceives and copes with it. Individuals who experience trauma may develop symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, heightened anxiety, mood disturbances, and behavioral changes (Van der Kolk, 2014).

For law enforcement officers, trauma Counselling serves as a vital intervention for maintaining mental well-being. Effective trauma Counselling programs offer several key benefits:

- **Reduction of PTSD Symptoms** – Counselling supports officers in processing traumatic experiences, thereby alleviating symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Improvement in Mental Health** – Regular Counselling sessions help mitigate the risk of depression and anxiety by equipping officers with effective coping strategies.
- **Substance Abuse Prevention** – By promoting healthier coping mechanisms, trauma Counselling can reduce the likelihood of substance dependence.
- **Enhanced Job Performance** – Addressing trauma-related challenges contributes to improved job performance, professional satisfaction, and overall well-being.

Role of Trauma Counselling

Providing a Safe Space

Trauma Counselling creates a confidential and supportive setting where individuals can openly share their emotions without fear of judgment. Establishing this safe environment is crucial, as it allows clients to explore and confront their traumatic experiences, which can often be challenging and distressing (Herman, 1997). The therapeutic bond formed during Counselling fosters trust, making it easier for individuals to discuss their experiences.

Facilitating Emotional Processing

Experiencing trauma can lead to a range of complex emotions, including fear, anger, and sadness. Trauma Counselling assists individuals in processing these emotions in a constructive manner. Therapists utilize various evidence-based approaches, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), to help clients

reshape negative thought patterns and alleviate emotional distress (Shapiro, 2018).

Developing Coping Strategies

An essential aspect of trauma Counselling is equipping individuals with coping mechanisms to manage their symptoms and minimize the impact of trauma on daily life. Techniques such as stress management, relaxation exercises, and mindfulness practices are commonly employed. These strategies enhance overall well-being and foster resilience (Linehan, 1993).

Promoting Recovery and Resilience

Trauma Counselling plays a significant role in guiding individuals toward recovery and resilience. It enables clients to make sense of their trauma, integrate their experiences, and take steps toward rebuilding their lives. The primary objective is to empower individuals, helping them regain a sense of control and develop a renewed sense of hope and purpose (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Addressing Trauma's Impact on Relationships

The effects of trauma often extend to interpersonal relationships, straining connections with family, friends, and colleagues. Trauma Counselling frequently involves assisting individuals in repairing and strengthening these relationships. This may include improving communication skills, establishing healthy boundaries, and restoring trust (Courtois & Ford, 2013).

Preventing Long-Term Effects

When left unaddressed, trauma can contribute to long-term psychological issues, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and substance abuse. Early intervention through trauma Counselling plays a vital role in mitigating these risks by addressing symptoms and offering support before they become deeply rooted (APA, 2020).

Empirical Evidence Supporting Trauma Counselling

Research underscores the effectiveness of trauma Counselling in alleviating symptoms and enhancing overall well-being for trauma survivors. A meta-analysis conducted by Cuijpers et al. (2016) found that trauma-focused therapies, such as CBT and EMDR, significantly reduce PTSD symptoms and improve functioning. Similarly, a study by Witte et al. (2020) highlighted that trauma-informed care approaches contribute to improved recovery outcomes for individuals affected by trauma.

Best Practices in Trauma Counselling for Policemen

Trauma Counselling is crucial for policemen due to the challenging and high-stress nature of their profession. Exposure to traumatic events such as violence, death, and critical incidents can have significant psychological effects. Implementing effective trauma Counselling strategies can help mitigate these effects and promote the well-being of officers.

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact: Recognizing Trauma Symptoms: Trauma can present in emotional, psychological, and physical ways. Symptoms may include intrusive thoughts, nightmares, hyper-vigilance, and emotional detachment (Brewin et al., 2000). Awareness of these symptoms is essential for providing appropriate support.

Trauma-Informed Care: This approach involves recognizing the impact of trauma and creating a Counselling environment that prioritizes safety, trust, peer support, and empowerment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014). Ensuring sensitivity to the experiences of officers enhances the effectiveness of Counselling interventions.

Establishing a Supportive Counselling Environment: Building Trust and Rapport: Trust is fundamental in trauma Counselling. Officers should feel safe to share their experiences without fear of stigma or judgment. Active listening, empathy, and validation of their emotions foster a trusting relationship (Herman, 2022).

Ensuring Confidentiality: Maintaining confidentiality is essential to encourage officers to seek help. They must be assured that their disclosures will not impact their careers or relationships with colleagues (Vardaman, 2013). Clearly communicating confidentiality policies strengthens trust in the Counselling process.

Utilizing Evidence-Based Interventions: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): CBT is an effective method for addressing trauma-related disorders like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It focuses on identifying and challenging unhelpful thought patterns and behaviors while developing coping mechanisms (Beck, 2011).

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR): EMDR facilitates the processing of traumatic memories using bilateral stimulation techniques, such as guided eye movements, to reduce emotional distress associated with traumatic experiences (Shapiro, 2014).

Stress Management Techniques: Techniques such as mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and deep breathing can help officers manage stress and alleviate trauma symptoms (Kabat-Zinn, 2019).

Providing Peer Support and Counselling: Peer Support Programs: Trained officers offering emotional support and guidance to colleagues can be highly effective. As peers, they understand the unique challenges of police work and provide relatable assistance (Harris et al., 2018).

Crisis Intervention Teams: Specialized crisis intervention teams (CIT) are trained to respond to mental health crises, offering immediate support and connecting officers to appropriate mental health resources (Cochran et al., 2000).

Promoting Organizational Support: Developing a Supportive Culture: Encouraging a culture of mental health awareness within police departments helps reduce the stigma around seeking psychological support. Open discussions about mental well-being are crucial in normalizing mental health care (Violanti et al., 2017).

Implementing Regular Training: Training programs focused on trauma recognition and management for both officers and supervisors enhance awareness and preparedness. These programs should include self-care strategies and methods to identify trauma in colleagues (Vlahov et al., 2006).

Providing Access to Resources: Ensuring that officers have access to mental health services, including Counselling, support groups, and wellness programs, is vital in maintaining their overall well-being (Linden et al., 2006).

Recommendations for Enhancing Mental Health Support in the Nigeria Police Force

To improve the mental well-being of Nigerian police officers, the following measures are suggested:

- ▶ Establish Specialized Trauma Counselling Units – Nigeria should create dedicated Counselling units within the police force to provide targeted mental health support, ensuring officers receive professional psychological care.
- ▶ Allocate Adequate Funding and Resources – Sufficient financial and material resources should be provided to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of Counselling services for all personnel.
- ▶ Raise Awareness on Mental Health – Initiatives should be introduced to educate officers on the importance of mental well-being and to eliminate the stigma surrounding psychological support.
- ▶ Conduct Routine Mental Health Assessments – Regular evaluations should be carried out to detect and address trauma-related challenges at an early stage, preventing long-term psychological distress.

Conclusion

Trauma exposure significantly impacts the mental health of police officers, leading to issues such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Addressing these mental health challenges through peer support programs, professional Counselling, and stress management training is crucial for improving the well-being and performance of law enforcement personnel. Implementing these interventions can help mitigate the adverse effects of trauma and support officers in their demanding roles.

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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 & Bodtger, 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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IMPACT OF DIGITAL LITERACY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ONLINE BEHAVIOUR AND WELL-BEING IN RIVERS EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT, RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of digital literacy on the online behaviour and well being of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria. Digital literacy's impact on students' online activity, including their capacity to utilise digital platforms securely and responsibly, and their psychological well-being is the key focus. Out of the eight (8) Local Government Areas in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria, a multi-stage sampling technique was used to select four (4) L.G.As and 450 secondary school students from six (6) schools in the L.G.As. The Impact Of Digital Literacy On Secondary School Students' Online Behaviour And Well-Being In Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State Questionnaire"was used for data collection. This questionnaire measured digital literacy, online behavioural patterns, and indices of digital well being such as stress, self-esteem, and social interaction. The Cronbach Alpha method yielded 0.84 reliability. Correlation analysis examined digital literacy and interest components. The study demonstrated an association between higher levels of digital literacy and more positive online behaviours, such as responsible internet use and critical online information assessment. Higher digital literate students reported reduced stress from online activities and more self-esteem. However, the research found that excessive digital gadget use, especially among students, can harm social bonds and welfare. This indicates the significant impact of digital literacy on secondary students' online behaviour and well being. Thus, schools and governments must prioritise digital literacy initiatives that increase technical skills and promote positive online habits and well-being.

Keywords: Digital literacy, Online behaviour, Well-being, Online stress, Self-esteem

Introduction

Digital literacy is the skilful use of technology for communication, information generation, evaluation, and retrieval which is crucial nowadays. Technology, ethics, and analysis help people navigate the digital world. It includes online safety and privacy, problem-solving using digital tools, and ethical and constructive digital behaviour (Rivadeneira et al.,

2023). Online behaviour is part of digital literacy and includes how people access, interact with, and use digital material and manage their online identity. However, online well-being is the mental, emotional, and social well-being of those who utilise technology. Quality of online interaction, information, and offline-to-online activities all affect it (Akingbade et al., 2023).

Digital literacy is important, yet some secondary school children struggle in acquiring it. The concerns are limited technological access, lack of formal digital skills training, and rapid expansion of digital technologies that exceed their capabilities. Socioeconomic gaps hinder students' digital resource utilisation and generate a digital gap that worsens social and educational inequalities (Oluwole et al., 2021). Poor digital literacy has serious effects for children. Limited digital technology and application knowledge puts students at risk of cyberbullying, improper content, and inability to tell fact from fiction. These behaviours can worsen sadness, online anxiety, and loneliness (Bibire, 2020). In a technology-dependent society, those without proper digital literacy may struggle to use digital resources for education, research, and collaboration. It will also impede academic advancement. Digital literacy teaching is needed because children are more technology-dependent (Porat et al., 2018). Giving students the tools they need to safely navigate the internet can help them develop good online habits and improve their well-being. This helps students succeed academically and personally. This study seeks to evaluate the influence of digital literacy on the online behaviour of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria, assess the impact of digital literacy on the psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, and explore the potential negative effects of excessive digital device use on the social connectedness and overall well-being of digitally literate secondary school students

Statement of the Problem

Digital technology's fast adoption has changed education and social interaction, especially for secondary school children. This move has put students in danger owing to poor digital literacy. Secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, have suffered from poor digital literacy, which has affected their online behaviour and well-being (Tang & Chaw, 2016). Students without adequate digital literacy skills are prone to cyberbullying, online predators, and dangerous information, which is capable of causing anxiety and sadness. Students who cannot critically evaluate internet material becomes vulnerable to disinformation, which can impact their views and decisions, resulting in low academic performance and incorrect ideas. The high use of digital devices without sufficient direction has led to excessive screen time, which disrupts sleep, reduces social contacts, and weakens family relationships (Prior et al., 2016). Also, lack of balance between digital and real-world activities increases isolation and lowers self-esteem, affecting students' mental health. Thus, this study examines how digital literacy affects these factors and emphasises the need for comprehensive digital literacy programs in secondary schools in Rivers East Senatorial District to protect students' mental and emotional health. The study seeks to answer these questions:

1. What is the influence of digital literacy on the online behaviour of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of digital literacy on the psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District?
3. What are the potential negative effects of excessive digital device use on the social connectedness and overall well-being of digitally literate secondary school students?

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To evaluate the influence of digital literacy on the online behaviour of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. To assess the impact of digital literacy on the psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
3. To explore the potential negative effects of excessive digital device use on the social connectedness and overall well-being of digitally literate secondary school students.

Research Hypotheses

1. Higher levels of digital literacy are positively correlated with more responsible and safe online behaviour among secondary school students.
2. Higher levels of digital literacy are associated with lower levels of online-related stress and higher self-esteem among secondary school students.
3. Excessive use of digital devices negatively impacts the social connectedness and overall well-being of secondary school students, even if they possess high levels of digital literacy.

Concept of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy involves navigating, understanding, and creating information utilising digital platforms and technologies. Beyond technological abilities, it requires critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical digital resource use (Yu et al., 2017). As people navigate increasingly digital surroundings, digital literacy is essential to 21st-century schooling. Digital literacy encompasses media, information, and communication skills. These skills are essential for effective digital engagement, whether for work, school, or pleasure (Nwufo and Nwoke, 2018). Digital literacy expands with technology, emphasising the need for ongoing learning and adaptability. Social, economic, and cultural variables affect digital literacy. An increasingly linked world requires understanding the varied nature of digital literacy to develop a technologically competent and responsible society.

Digital Literacy and Online Behaviour

People's interactions with digital content, social media, and online communities are

greatly influenced by their level of digital literacy. Higher digital literacy levels have been linked to beneficial online behaviours including fact-checking, protecting privacy, and polite communication (Spante et al., 2018). On the other hand, those with low levels of digital literacy are more prone to false information, online scams, and unethical behaviour (Oluwole et al., 2021). Through the ability to distinguish legitimate information from untrustworthy sources and navigate the complicated online environment, persons with digital literacy are better prepared (Okika & Blessing, 2017). It also promotes responsible online citizenship by motivating users to uphold ethical norms, engage in civil conversation, and safeguard their digital identities (Akingbade et al., 2023). While previous studies have established a general link between digital literacy and responsible online behaviour, most focus on adult populations or urban youth in developed regions, with limited attention to Nigerian secondary school students, particularly in semi-urban areas like Rivers East Senatorial District. Additionally, there is insufficient localized research that captures the nuanced behaviours of students in response to cultural, educational, and infrastructural differences. This study fills that gap by evaluating how varying levels of digital literacy influence online conduct among secondary school students in Rivers East, providing context-specific insights that can guide local educational and digital policy interventions.

Digital Literacy and Psychological Well-being

Digital literacy and psychological well-being are increasingly studied as digital gadgets become part of daily life. Effective digital literacy can improve psychological well-being by giving users a sense of control and competence in the digital realm (Akingbade et al., 2023). High digital literacy helps people manage their online presence, create limits, and avoid negative digital habits like social media overconsumption, which can cause anxiety and sadness (Akeusola, 2023). Poor digital literacy may lead to dissatisfaction, alienation, and inadequacy in a world where continual connectedness can overwhelm people who cannot handle it (Oluwole et al., 2021). Digitally educated people are better at balancing their online and offline lives, improving mental health (Okoh et al., 2025). Therefore, improving digital literacy is crucial for technological navigation and psychological resilience and well-being in the digital age. Existing literature acknowledges that digital literacy can foster psychological resilience by enabling individuals to manage digital stressors. However, most studies have not explored this dynamic in adolescent populations in sub-Saharan Africa, where digital exposure is rapidly growing but digital education is often lacking. Moreover, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that examine how digital literacy directly impacts mental health outcomes like anxiety, self-worth, and emotional regulation among secondary school students. The current study addresses this gap by assessing how digital literacy influences psychological well-being within the specific socio-educational setting of Rivers East Senatorial District, contributing much-needed data to this emerging field.

Negative Effects of Excessive Digital Device Use

Digital gadget abuse can harm physical and mental health. Screen use may cause eye strain, headaches, and bad posture, as well as sedentary lifestyles that raise obesity risk (Adegbola, 2023). Excessive computer use can cause anxiety, despair, and social isolation, especially in children (Porat et al., 2018). Digital platforms' rapid pleasure and continual connectedness may cause addiction, making it hard to unplug and communicate in person (Nwosu, 2023). Screens' blue light alters circadian cycles, affecting sleep quality (Dawodu et al., 2023). Spending too much time on social media, especially comparing yourself to crafted online personas, may also lower self-esteem (Nwufo and Nwoke, 2018). Digital gadgets are essential to modern life, but abuse poses serious problems, emphasising the need for balance and digital wellbeing. Research has documented the adverse physical and mental effects of excessive digital device use, but much of it is global or generalized, with minimal focus on digitally literate youth in Nigeria. Specifically, there is limited insight into how digital literacy may paradoxically expose students to new forms of digital overuse or addiction under the guise of competence. Furthermore, few studies explore how this overuse impacts social connectedness and well-being in school-aged adolescents. This study fills these critical gaps by exploring the unintended consequences of high digital literacy, especially its correlation with social detachment and digital fatigue among secondary school students in Rivers East.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Davis' 1989 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). A well-known idea explains how individuals adopt and use technology. Davis (1989) identified perceived utility (PU) and perceived ease of use as the key TAM factors affecting technology adoption. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) define perceived usefulness as the amount to which a technology improves performance, whereas perceived ease of use is the extent to which the system requires no effort. These two principles affect a person's technological attitude, which affects their behavioural intention and actual use. The approach is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which claims that behavioural intentions best predict actual conduct (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Technology Acceptance Model is useful for studying how secondary school students' view of digital tools impact their online conduct and well-being in digital literacy. If students believe digital literacy is beneficial and easy to acquire, they are more likely to behave well online and feel better about themselves (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2016). However, youngsters who struggle with technology may engage in harmful online habits that harm their health. Technology Acceptance Model shows how digital literacy may effect academic achievement, mental health, and cyber safety by linking students' online conduct to digital literacy (Teo, 2011). By understanding why students utilise digital literacy, Rivers East Senatorial District teachers and legislators may develop targeted interventions to build digital competence, promote good online behaviour, and boost well-being (Venkatesh et al., 2016).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey. Descriptive survey designs allow the collection of quantitative data from a large sample of respondents, making population trends and patterns easier to study. This design was useful for studying how digital literacy influences students' online behaviour, mental health, and social connections.

The survey includes all Rivers State, Nigeria's East Senatorial District secondary school students. This region has multiple secondary schools in eight LGAs. Students with access to digital devices and the internet both necessary for online activities are included in the demographic of interest due to the emphasis on digital literacy. The research focused on junior and senior secondary school children since they engage most online and are in a developmental stage where digital literacy is crucial.

A representative population sample was selected using multi-stage procedures. First, four of the eight Rivers East Senatorial District LGAs were randomly selected. Six secondary schools in each LGA were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure public and private school representation. Systematic random sampling selected 450 students from each school. A proportionate number of students from each grade level represented the school's student population.

The major data collection instrument is a structured questionnaire named "The Impact of Digital Literacy on Secondary School Students' Online Behaviour and Well-Being in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State Questionnaire." The questionnaire has 3 sections: The first part collects age, gender, and grade data. Section B tests students' digital literacy by asking them questions on utilising digital tools, accessing websites, and employing critical thinking when engaging online. Section C investigated online behaviour, psychological well-being, and social connection by assessing online safety, stress, self-esteem, and the impact of digital device use on social interactions.

Respondents rate their agreement with digital literacy and wellness items on a Likert scale. For this type of survey study, questionnaires are ideal since they collect data from many respondents.

Educational technology and psychology experts validated the questionnaire to ensure it assesses digital literacy, online behaviour, and well-being. A pilot study with a small sample of similar-demographic students increased the questionnaire's content validity. Based on pilot testing, the questionnaire was made more relevant and straightforward.

The Cronbach Alpha test found 0.84 dependability for the device. This shows that the questionnaire questions properly evaluate the desired dimensions due to their high internal consistency. Use of the instrument in primary research is usually recommended for reliability coefficients over 0.70.

A selected sample of students from each of the four LGAs received the questionnaire to collect data. Trained research assistants distributed and collected the questionnaires to ensure

students understood and responded accurately. Data was collected by study assistants visiting each school for two weeks to administer questionnaires during school hours. Everything was done to minimise disruptions to students' academic timetables. To encourage honest answers, students were told participation was voluntary and their answers would be kept confidential. Students who needed help completing the questionnaire were helped to collect correct and complete data.

Data was analysed using inferential and descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores were used to analyse participant demographics and digital literacy and online activity patterns. Inferential correlation analysis was used to test hypotheses and examine the relationships between digital literacy and outcomes including social connectedness, psychological well-being, and online behaviour. The direction and intensity of these relationships were determined by Pearson's correlation coefficient. This is because the hypotheses are correlational and predictive in nature, warranting the use of Pearson's correlation analysis. These techniques are well-suited for quantitative survey data, where variables are continuous or ordinal (treated as interval), such as scores from Likert-scale items measuring digital literacy, well-being, and online behaviour. The use of Pearson's correlation assumes:

Linearity: The relationship between digital literacy and each outcome variable (e.g., online behaviour, self-esteem) is linear.

Normality: Both variables should ideally follow a normal distribution.

Results

Analysis of Digital Literacy Levels

Table 1: Mean Scores of Students' Digital Literacy Levels

Digital Literacy Component	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Basic Digital Skills	3.45	0.68
Critical Online Thinking	3.22	0.74
Responsible Online Behaviour	3.67	0.64

According to the results, students' levels of digital literacy range from moderate to high. The mean score for responsible online behaviour is the highest, at 3.67, suggesting that students are at least somewhat skilled at using the internet in a safe and responsible manner. Still, there is potential for development, especially in critical online thinking (mean score = 3.22), which is the lowest.

Correlation Analysis of Digital Literacy and Online Behaviour

Table 2: Correlation Between Digital Literacy and Online Behaviour

Variable	Pearson's r	p-value
Digital Literacy vs. Online Behaviour	0.62	<0.001

Table 2 indicates a statistically significant connection ($p < 0.001$) of 0.62 between digital literacy and internet behaviour. The notion that students who possess greater levels of digital literacy are more likely to participate in responsible and safe online behaviour is supported by the substantial positive connection indicated by this.

Impact of Digital Literacy on Psychological Well-Being

According to the second hypothesis, secondary school students who possess better levels of digital literacy also tend to have lower levels of stress connected to their online experiences and higher self-esteem. The findings of the correlation study between measures of psychological well-being and digital literacy are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Correlation Between Digital Literacy and Psychological Well-Being

Variable	Pearson's r	p-value
Digital Literacy vs. Online-Related Stress	-0.45	<0.001
Digital Literacy vs. Self-Esteem	0.54	<0.001

Table 3's findings show a negative correlation (-0.45) between the two variables, suggesting that students who are more digitally literate are less stressed out by online activities. Furthermore, there is a positive association (0.54) between self-esteem and digital literacy, indicating that students who are more technologically literate also have greater self-esteem. The second hypothesis is supported by the statistical significance of both relationships ($p < 0.001$).

Analysis of Excessive Digital Device Use and Its Effects on Social Connectedness and Well-Being

Table 4: Impact of Excessive Digital Device Use on Social Connectedness and Well-Being

Variable	Pearson's r	p-value
Excessive Device Use vs. Social Connectedness	-0.38	<0.001
Excessive Device Use vs. Overall Well-Being	-0.42	<0.001

Table 4 presents statistically substantial ($p < 0.001$) unfavourable correlations between excessive digital device usage and social connectivity (-0.38) and overall well-being (-0.42). These findings support the third hypothesis by indicating that students who use digital devices excessively may experience a decline in social connectivity and general well-being even when they possess high levels of digital literacy.

Discussion of Findings

Digital literacy was strongly linked to appropriate online behaviour in secondary school students. This shows that children with better digital literacy are more likely to engage in safe and responsible online activities including critical information evaluation and online safety. This was supported by the study of Tang and Chaw (2016) who found that digital literacy is essential for blended learning. They found that children with higher digital literacy can navigate and connect with digital platforms meaningfully, which can extend to online behaviour. Students who are more proficient at using digital resources for learning are likely to behave more responsibly and informedly online. Porat, Blau and Barak (2018) also distinguished between junior high students perceived and real digital literacy. Their study demonstrates that students' digital abilities differ from what they think they know, which affects their online behaviour. They stated that students with better digital abilities are more likely to behave responsibly online. These findings support the idea that better digital literacy leads to responsible online behaviour because digitally literate people can identify and minimise online dangers.

The study also found a negative association between digital literacy and online stress and a good correlation with self-esteem. This suggests that digitally educated children have greater self-esteem and less online stress. This resonates with the study that was conducted during the COVID-19 epidemic in Nigeria by Akingbade et al. (2023) who discovered that e-Health literacy was linked to decreased anxiety and sadness. Their study showed that digital health resource literacy helps people handle health stresses and uncertainties, reducing anxiety and despair. Hence, higher general digital literacy may help secondary school students handle online challenges like cyber bullying, misinformation, and digital overload, reducing online stress and improving their sense of control and self-esteem. Also, Rivadeneira et al. (2023) examined how COVID-19 affected university students' subjective well-being and digital health literacy, proving that higher digital health literacy was associated with improved well-being and decreased stress among students. This shows that improved digital abilities enable people to find and analyse online material, improving their mental health. As secondary school students become more secure in digital surroundings, they experience less online stress and have stronger self-esteem and mental health.

Finally, the study showed that high digitally-literate students' excessive digital usage significantly affects their social connectivity and well-being. Noting that, despite their digital expertise, students who spend too much time on digital gadgets may feel alone and depressed. Oluwole et al. (2021)'s study supported this by examining internet addiction in medical students and its harmful impacts on mental health. Their study shows that irrespective of digital proficiency, highly educated students with great digital literacy have decreased well-being owing to excessive internet use. This suggests that digital literacy alone cannot protect children against overuse's negative impacts, such as social isolation, stress, and anxiety. The analogies suggested that overusing digital gadgets harms well-being of students regardless of digital

literacy. Similarly, Bibire (2020) study examined the harmful impact of excessive social media usage on the mental health of Nigerian university students. They proved that despite students' digital proficiency, regular usage of these platforms linked to lower social connectivity and mental health issues. This suggests that usage of digital networks might cause social isolation, despair, and anxiety, which harm well-being even in skilled users.

Conclusion

This study highlights the impact of digital literacy on the online behaviour and psychological well-being of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State. Digital literacy is important for responsible and safe online activity because children with higher levels of digital literacy are better at navigating the internet. The study also highlights the importance of digital literacy to students' psychological well-being since it boosts self-esteem and reduces online stress. Even among technologically savvy students, excessive digital device use may reduce wellbeing and social connectedness, according to the study. According to these findings, digital literacy is vital, but it must be accompanied with good use practices to avoid harmful impacts. The report shows that educational institutions and lawmakers must prioritise digital literacy efforts that educate students technological skills and promote a responsible and balanced digital lifestyle. By promoting digital literacy, schools can help students use technology safely.

Counselling Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study have substantial significance for Counselling practice, particularly in the setting of secondary school. As students' lives become increasingly dependent on digital literacy, school counsellors must recognise its dual nature. Digital literacy helps children navigate the internet securely and responsibly, but excessive use of digital gadgets can harm mental health and social connections. Digital literacy should be integrated into counselling programs to address these challenges proactively. The relevance of digital well-being and technical components of digital literacy must be stressed. Online stress management, digital self-esteem, and good online practices should be covered in counselling programs. Counsellors should also collaborate with schools and parents to foster balanced digital use. This might include setting screen time limits, encouraging face-to-face social contacts, and encouraging digital awareness. Counsellors should also be able to recognise and handle student internet addiction and social isolation. Counsellors can assist students navigate the digital environment while preserving their mental and social health by offering individualised support and interventions. This study also suggests that counsellors require continual professional development to keep up with digital literacy and well-being trends and problems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools should offer comprehensive digital literacy programs beyond basic abilities.

Critical thinking, appropriate online behaviour, and online stress management should be covered in these programs. Teachers should be taught to teach these programs so students may securely traverse the digital world.

2. Schools and parents should collaboratively encourage balanced digital usage among children. The dangers of excessive digital device usage and the significance of a good digital-life balance should be taught in schools.
3. School support systems should address the psychological effects of digital device use on students. This might include digital well-being counselling, peer support groups, and parent training on managing their children's digital life. These support tools should assist children build resilience against digital technology's possible negative impacts and promote a healthy school digital culture.

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INFLUENCE OF COUNSELLING IN PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND STABILITY AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the Influence of Counselling in Promoting National Integration and Development for Peaceful Co-Existence and Stability among Ethnic Groups in Nasarawa State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive survey design was used for study. The sample consisted of 381 respondents from a population of 56,428 people across ethnic groups in Nasarawa State. A self-developed questionnaire titled: Influence of Counselling in Promoting National Integration and Development among Ethnic Group in Nasarawa State for Peaceful Co-Existence and Stability questionnaire (ICPNIDAEDNSPCSQ) was validated by two experts and was administered to respondents. The co-efficient of 0.81 Data collected were analyzed using percentages and one sample T-test. The result showed that counselling has significant influence on Promoting National Integration and Development for Peaceful Coexistence among Ethnic Group in Nasarawa State. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that counsellors should play integrative and unifying role among the ethnic groups in the society, in binding all ethnic groups together in time of crises communal clashes, conflicts and confusion and one of cardinal principle of Counselling should emphasize on the necessity of peace and unity of the individual and group (society). Counsellors should emphasize on the integrating harmonious and peaceful co-existence and the need for healthy social interaction among ethnic group so that together we can fight against eradication of violence and oppression in the state.

Keywords: Counselling, National Integration, Ethnic group and Development.

Introduction

Has the ethnicity problem impacted the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of Nigerian society as a whole? If yes, how has it impeded national integration and progress in the country? Looking back, it's clear that people's illogical beliefs arise from repeated internal monologues such as "I and my ethnic group are good and you and your ethnic group are

bad" (Agbakwuru, 2013). A wide variety of languages and cultures coexist in Nigeria's cosmopolitan society. In the struggle to distribute limited resources among her inhabitants, this multicultural society—which is home to over 250 distinct ethnic groups—often becomes a "do or die" narrative. Without the knowledge or agreement of these ethnic groups, the British united them in 1914 to establish the Nigerian state. To this day, this is still one of the biggest obstacles to national cohesion and development, as well as the construction of a robust nation. So, it's not necessary to beat a dead horse when it comes to the reality that since independence, Nigeria's pursuit of national integration and development has been fraught with peril and difficulty, particularly in light of the fact that political leadership in the country has a tendency to prioritize ethnic allegiance and loyalty in the electoral process. According to Utulu (2013), all parts of Nigerian society have been consumed by political violence, cult activities, and ethno-religious conflict since the return to civilian rule in 1999. There is no denying that the ethnic imbalance in our leadership elections and resource distribution is the root cause of the sectarian violence that plagues the Nigerian state.

A state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual understanding and programs is what Jacob and Tenue (1964) mean when they say national integration. It's a relationship of community among people inside the same political body. Thus, they are alluding to a community of unity whose members are prepared to coexist peacefully, work together, and face a common fate. It has also been defined as: the process through which individuals within a social system form connections that allow the system's boundaries to endure and the boundaries of sub-systems to have less of an impact on behavior as time goes on. Members of the social system go through an increasing cycle of interaction, collaboration, agreement, and community as a result of this process (Diez, 2017). The scope of national integration encompasses a wide range of interpersonal dynamics and mindsets. According to Shamaija and Coser (2017), when people from different social and cultural backgrounds come together to form a single nation, they are engaging in national integration. It takes for granted that we live in a multicultural society where different peoples' languages and other culturally aware traits define them. It further assumes that different groupings can be considered part of a political unit. So, the issue of national integration is how to foster a feeling of territorial nationalism that is more important than or equal to local allegiances. Filling the gap and reducing misunderstanding and conflict that can lead to disintegration requires connecting the government with the governed, leaders with the led, and the led with the led. Integrative behavior, or the ability of individuals in a society to work together toward a common goal, is another issue, as is the minimal worth of economic and political resources, which contributes to the legitimacy of the polity.

Oluwatoyin and Orisa (2011), as a whole, a nation or state develops when its citizens experience progress in all areas of life, including economics, politics, and religion. When a nation or nations are able to provide social amenities like medical care, transportation, clean water, and high-quality schools to their citizens, they are said to have developed nationally. The

counsellor and counselee form an interpersonal bond in Counselling. According to Johnson (2021), Counselling involves a person-to-person or face-to-face interaction between a counselor and a client to address educational, occupational, social, recreational, or moral issues. In Counselling, according to Okeke (2019), the therapist works with the client to help them grow into their full potential by drawing on his or her extensive training and experience in the field. Enhanced capacity to manage daily challenges and do daily tasks. Development and otherwise The role of the counsellors in Nasarawa State is twofold: first, to help the many ethnic groups within the state become more stable, and second, to offer services that can contribute to the development of society as a whole. Positive behavioral change is the ultimate goal of counselling, which strives to assist the client in leading a fulfilling and fruitful life. Achieving adjustment and fulfillment in key life decisions is one of the goals of Counselling. Why? Because in Counselling, the emphasis is on the client's wants and issues, and the therapist teaches the client how to address those needs.

Ethnic groups in Nasarawa State would be able to learn about their issues and how to fix them through Counselling, according to Okeke (2012). The counselor's goal is to help clients develop an awareness of themselves while also assisting them in participating in mutual programs, learning about the world around them, recognizing their place in it, and adapting to socially acceptable behaviors. In light of the difficulties we currently face, the counselor's approach will be to lead clients on a path of self-discovery, encouraging them to question and replace their existing value systems with those of a more inclusive and equitable society. This, in turn, will help clients overcome personal obstacles and fulfill their unique roles within it. According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004), national integration and growth for peaceful cohabitation can be achieved through Counselling, which is a helping relationship. During the course of this investigation, the researcher took into account two schools of thought. The first of these was Albert Ellis's (1963) Cognitive Model of Crisis Intervention, which holds that "crises are rooted in faulty thinking about the events or situation that surround the crises" rather than in the events or facts associated with them. To reduce panic and lawlessness, the model's interventionist prescription calls for practitioners (such as social psychologists, counselors, community and political leaders) to collaborate in communicating with those impacted by crises and insecurity in an effort to alter their perspective on the situation. Second, there's the realistic conflict hypothesis, which posits that groups become hostile toward one another when they compete head-on for few but valued resources. Because of this, it's not uncommon for members of certain ethnic groups to experience bias when competing with members of other groups. While certain ethnic groups experience greater success, others feel threatened and react defensively, leading to feelings of frustration and resentment among the former. Wars break out in this setting (Et al. Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

There is a major threat to national unity and development in Nigeria due to the ethnic

group's diversity, according to observations. Strong national integration was anticipated after Nigeria's independence in 1960 to help Nigerians develop a sense of national identity. The apparent cause of the civil war was the consolidation of tribal politics. When Ethiopia (2014) says that ethnic groups in Nigeria are only somewhat loyal to the government, it shows how worried he is about the system's inability to foster peaceful cohabitation and stability. As a result of tribal dominance in Nigerian political parties, there has been an upsurge in intercommunal or ethnic animosity and even open violence, and the persistent grievances of marginalization are indicative of a dwindling feeling of belonging in the land. There was a lack of national integration, which was intended to be striving for a common language that would link all Nigerians, and voting was conducted along tribal lines and interests. Nigerians should have been more culturally and nationally integrative. Some have argued that in order for Nigeria to achieve national integration, ethnic groups Counselling should focus on helping people reorganize themselves socially, psychologically, and emotionally so that they can live peacefully alongside one another. Consequently, the purpose of this research is to analyze how Counselling in Nasarawa State has impacted efforts at national integration and the cultivation of peaceful coexistence among various ethnic groups.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, this study proposes to do the following:

- (i) investigate the impact of Counselling on national integration and development in order to promote peaceful coexistence among the many ethnic groups found in Nasarawa State.
- (ii) Counselling factors that impact national growth and integration

Research Questions

- (i) Is there a correlation between Counselling and improved opportunities for ethnic groups in Nasarawa State to live together in harmony?
- (ii) How can a counselor use certain Counselling variables to impact national integration and development?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study;

H₀₁: Counselling has no significant influence on national integration and development in Nasarawa State.

H₀₂: Variables used by counsellor have no significant influence in promoting national integration and development.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design for its research. This design, according to Anikweze (2013), involves collecting data from a random sample of the target population within a short period of time. The reason for this is that descriptive surveys need data collected

at a specific time from a large sample in order to describe a population that is representative of the sample at that time. There are 56,428 male and female participants from 5 different ethnic groups in Nasarawa State that make up the population of this study. In this study, a total of 381 participants were chosen for the sample based on the criteria laid out in the Research Advisor (2006) Table for selecting samples from certain populations. The researcher employed a purposive selection technique to choose five ethnic groups from the area—the Gwandara, Eggon, Mada, Alago, and Gbge—to arrive at this sample size. This study used the Nasarawa State Questionnaire on the Impact of Counselling on National Integration and Development for Peaceful Coexistence (IGCNIDAEGPCQ) as its research tool. Section 'A' of the survey asked for participants' personal information. Part B of the survey had three questions with four possible responses: strongly agree, disagree, and very disagree. The alternatives' values were 4, 3, 2, and 1 in that order. The mean score required for admittance was 2.50. We did not accept any item with a score below 2.50. The validity method made sure that the questionnaire was legitimate in both appearance and substance.

The investigator submitted it for content and face validity testing to a psychologist and a guidance and Counselling specialist from Nasarawa State University. Their feedback was useful for both rephrasing and cutting out unnecessary details. With the assistance of research assistants, the researcher personally went to each of the ethnic groups that were sampled and handed out copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. We clarified the unclear purposes of the instrument and the study. Since the material would be utilized exclusively for study purposes, the researcher has made an appeal for cooperation. To answer the study objectives, the data was analyzed using percentages to present frequency tables, mean score, and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test statistics at a significance level of 0.05. The one-sample t-test was selected for its suitability as a non-parametric inferential statistical tool for the examination of nominal or frequency data. A correlation coefficient of 0.81 was produced by the formula. Given this, the device was deemed very dependable for the investigation. The tables that follow display the outcomes.

Results

The results of the study are therefore, presented as follows:

The distribution of respondents on the basis of gender and ethnic groups

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents on the basis of gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	180	47.2%
Female	201	52.8%
Total	381	100%

Table 1 shows that out of 381 people sampled, 180 (47.2%) were males while the (52.5%) were females.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of Ethnic Group

Ethnic	Frequency	Percentage
Gwandara	80	210%
Eggon	60	15.7%
Mada	41	10.8%
Alago	120	31.5%
Tiv	80	21%
Total	381	100%

Table 2 indicates that out of 381 ethnic groups sampled, 150 (30%) were Gwandara, 150 (20%) Eggon, 120 (30%) Alago 20 (30%) Mada (20%) and 80 (30) were Tiv.

Research Question 1: What influence does counselling have on promoting national integration and for peaceful coexistence and stability development among ethnic groups in Nasarawa State?

Table 3: Mean score on influence of counselling on promoting of national integration and development for peaceful coexistence among ethnic groups in Nasarawa State

S/N	Statements	N		Std	Remark
1	Through cooperation people will promote national integration and development	381	3.40	0.76	Accepted
2	Counselling will help promote national integration by encouraging people togetherness.	381	3.45	0.82	Accepted
3	Through counselling spirit, National integration and development will be promoted among ethnic group	381	2.78	0.81	Accepted
4	Ethnic group will strive to internalize through Counselling to integrity	381	3.10	0.81	Accepted

According to Table 3, the average scores were 3.40, 3.45, 2.78, and 3.1.0 with standard deviations of 0.76, 0.82, 81, and 0.81, respectively. Our results demonstrate that the mean scores are higher than the decision cut off point, leading us to believe that Counselling can help Nasarawa state residents become more integrated as a nation and foster growth toward harmonious cohabitation.

Research Question Two: What are counselling variables employed by counsellor to influence national integration and development?

Table 4: Mean score and standard deviation on influence of counselling variables on national integration and development in Nasarawa state

S/N	Statements	N	Mean	Std	Remark
5	Group Counselling to people to participate in cultural and fishing festivals encourage national integration and development will be promoted	381	3.20	0.80	Accepted
6	Sports and game festivals will promote national integrations and development	381	3.30	0.84	Accepted
7	When we accept the spirit of togetherness and to be our brother's keeper national integration and development will be promoted	381	2.75	0.90	Accepted

The average scores were 3.20, 3.30, and 2.75 on the scale from 0.80 to 0.90 (standard deviations) in Table 4. Counselling variables cultural fishing, sports, and gaming festivals have an impact on encouraging national unity and growth in Nasarawa state for peaceful coexistence, as the mean scores are over the decision cutoff limit of 2.50.

Hypotheses Analysis One

Group counselling has no significant influence on promoting national integration and development for peaceful coexistence and stability among ethnic groups in Nasarawa State.

Table 5: One sample t-test Statistics on significant Influence of counselling on national integration and development in Nasarawa state.

S/N	Statements	N	Mean	Std	t	df	t-crit	Remark
1	Group through cooperation people will promote national integration and development	381						
2	Group counselling will help promote national integration by encouraging people togetherness	381	3.45	0.82	90.3	380	0.81	Significant
3	Through group counselling spirit, National development will be promoted among ethnic group	381						
4	Ethnic group will strive to internalize through Counselling to integrity	381						

In Table 5, we can see that the t.cal value is 90.3 and the t.crit value is 0.081. Accordingly, the null hypothesis, which posits that Counselling does not significantly impact fostering national integration and development in Nasarawa state for peaceful coexistence, is rejected, as

the t.cal value of 90.3>0.000 t.cri value. In conclusion, Counselling plays a crucial role in fostering national integration and fostering progress toward harmonious cohabitation and stability among Nasarawa State's ethnic groupings.

Hypothesis Two

Counselling variables has no significant influence on national integration and development in Nasarawa state.

Table 6: One sample t-test Statistics on significant Influence of counselling variables on national integration and development in Nasarawa state

S/N	Statements	N	Std	t	df	t-cri	Remark	
1	Group counselling encourages in cultural and fishing festivals for national integration and development will be promoted.	381						
2	Sports and game festivals will promote national integrations and development.	381	3.30	0.82	74.84	380	0.81	Influence
3	When we accept the spirit of togetherness and to be our brother's keeper national integration and development will be promoted.	381						

In Table 6, we can see that the t.cal value is 74.84 and the t.cri value is 0.000. That the Counselling variables do not significantly impact national integration and development is shown false by the fact that the t.cal value of 74.84>0.000 t.cri value. Cultural, athletic, and gaming festivals are examples of Counselling variables that have a substantial impact on the growth of national integration and the promotion of harmonious cohabitation and stability among the many ethnic groups residing in Nasarawa State.

Discussion of Findings

The first study question and hypothesis states that Counselling can help the ethnic groups in Nasarawa State integrate and evolve as a nation, which in turn can lead to peaceful cohabitation and stability. They probably think that peace is necessary for growth to be possible. We find evidence that supports Johnson's claim that Counselling significantly affects national security and integration (2021). The study's findings that Counselling and good education immediately affect a nation's greatness, unity, and prestige are also ones with which I agree. Nasarawa State Government reports from 2006 cover a wide range of subjects, including ethnic diversity, interethnic disputes, cultural exchange programs, economic growth, and government initiatives. Possible contributors to the outcomes include historical events, cultural norms, economic disparity, government initiatives, and public engagement. According to the

second research question and hypothesis, Counselling variables like cultural, fishing, sports, and gaming festivals greatly affect national integration and development, which in turn promotes peaceful cohabitation and stability among the various ethnic groups living in Nasara State. Our research backs up Miller's (2015) findings that getting more Nigerians to celebrate the national holiday will be good for the country's economy. Festivals bring people together and can empower them to feel pride in their nation and their place in it. On top of that, it could help people learn about and appreciate one another's cultures. The present situation is due to a combination of cultural, social-economic, governmental, and policy factors.

Conclusion

The government places a premium on promoting national unity in a multicultural and diversified nation like Nigeria and Nasarawa State. It is either essential to a nation's development or provides a strong basis for it. Emerging nations share a common thread: the fight for national unity and progress. Involvement from the state might speed things up or slow them down. Her policies, programs, and inactions could lead to discontent, animosity, retaliation, and poor morale among her ethnic community. The government of Nigeria must hasten the country's integration and development.

Recommendations

1. During times of crisis, community conflicts, disagreements, and misunderstanding, counselors should step up and bring people of various ethnic backgrounds together.
2. Counselling should include a core component of highlighting the importance of unity and harmony within communities and among individuals. Constructive social engagement between people of diverse ethnic backgrounds is important if we want to remove oppression and violence in our state. The goal of Counselling is to encourage this.
3. Counselors should stress the significance of tribal and cultural unity and state-wide integration. No other strategy has been found to foster national unity and harmony like this. Progress, harmony, and collaboration were achieved amongst individuals of diverse ethnicities and tribes.

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

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Abstract

The present study examined conflict management strategies mostly adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State. The study used descriptive survey design and applied stratified and random sampling techniques to select 120 participants from the population of the study. An instrument tagged “Counsellors’ Roles in Conflict Management Questionnaire (CRCMQ)” was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was face validated by five seasoned lecturers. The instrument was also subjected to a split-half reliability test, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 upon Chronbach Alpha statistical analysis. The data collected for the study were analysed using percentage, mean, standard deviation, rank order, and t-test. The three hypotheses formulated for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed that counsellors have positive perceptions of their roles in conflict management, and the most perceived conflict management strategies among guidance counsellors in Kaduna State; are using of empathic understanding, open communication and application of counselling technique such as cognitive restructuring, and that there was significant difference in the respondents’ expressions based on gender, while no significant difference was noticed based on religion and mode of practice. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among other things that; guidance and counselling practitioners should continue to make use of different counselling approaches such as; empathy, open

communication, and cognitive restructuring to manage conflict among parties that are involved in a conflict.

Keywords: Counsellor, Role, Conflict Management, Expression, Practitioner, Kaduna State

Introduction

Human relationship is naturally characterised by conflict which can arise in various contexts, including personal relationships, workplaces, and community settings. The term conflict has many definitions from different scholars and researchers but all pointed to almost the same meaning. The central meaning to this construct connotes, disagreement, discrepancy, friction or a state of tension that arises as a result of irreconcilable contradiction in, or clash of interest, values, beliefs and goals which leads to hostility or strained relationship between two or more parties. Abdulfattah and Yaser (2019) defined conflict as an antagonistic state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more parties. The authors above maintained further that conflicts mostly happen as a result of interactions among interdependent people who might perceive that their interests are in one way or the other, inconsistently exist with each other.

According to Abdulrahim (2020), the word conflict was originally from a Latin word “confligere” which means to strike certain thing together and as it were, it had a physical rather than moral connotation, although the English word of it has both qualities. In the physical sense, it represents two or more different things that is; moving to occupy the same space at the same time, or the logical inconsistency and the process of solution being identical. For instance, the logical or rational inconsistency of two billiard balls occupying the same space at the same time is resolved by the conflict which results in their rolling to two different positions (Abdulrahim, 2020). The above author stressed further that a conflict emerges whenever two or more persons or group of persons seek to possess the same object, occupy the same space or the same exclusive position, play incompatible goals, or undertake mutually incompatible means for achieving their purposes in particular situation.

Conflict exhibits people in multifarious dimensions such as; intra-personal conflict, inter-personal conflict, intra-group conflict among other categories of conflict. Generally speaking, conflicts develop over time with definable phases of occurrence. However, the course of a conflict can be divided into four distinct phases (that is; from phase 1 to phase IV). These are: latent phase (the early stage of its emergence); conscience phase (the stage at which both parties involved recognise its existence or become aware of it); action phase (both parties involved react in certain ways based on their perceptions or thoughts and feelings or emotions); and lastly, interaction phase (both parties involved interact with alternating conflict modes).

There are endless reasons while conflict arises among people. The Nigerians experiences

are peculiar to prevailing circumstances and literature have documented series of causes such as; religious intolerance, issue of political dominance, resource sharing, ethnicity among other causal factors. Egobueze (2021) affirmed that conflicts in Nigeria context can be better understood, when a critical examination of the origin and evolution of the people of Nigeria is established. Nigeria as a country, has an epic reservoir of history, characterized by several ethnic groups. An ethno-religious complex nation like Nigeria, with over 500 ethnic groups and over 500 languages being spoken by its people this nonetheless, is a potent ground for conflict among people.

Most of these ethnic groups are chauvinistic in nature, with unbridled primordial instincts which fuel crisis and disagreement among its constituents (Egobueze, 2021). The above source also stated that a nation is divided along the line of religion and ethnicity, with bigots that are sentimentally attached to their beliefs and wild interests for greediness and primitive accumulation and socio-economic exploitation of other groups which have made the people more divided among themselves and caused much hydra-headed conflict. Abdulrahim (2020) quoted Paul Bohannon in his work as follows:

“...society is impossible without conflict. But society is worse than impossible without the control of conflict”....

Going by the above quote, effective conflict management is therefore a vital tool for maintaining peace and tranquility among different set of people under any form of relationship. The term conflict management equally has varied definitions this is based on the field of study or the orientations of their users. Saqif and Anshori (2023) focused on group and defined conflict management as a factor system and organizational structure that supports group goals and improve group performance through learning and inspiration in the context of organizational improvement. Obona (2021) enlisted a number of mechanisms or strategies which are non-violent methods used to manage conflict in Nigeria these include; communication, collaboration, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, and education.

Wairisal (2022) highlighted key factors in the behavioural theory of conflict management and affirmed that there are three main approaches for conflict management behaviours, namely: collaboration, confrontation and accommodation. From the psychological point of view, conflict theory has three assumptions that is; human-beings are self-interested, the societies operate under a perpetual scarcity of resources and that, conflict is pervasive and unavoidable within and between social groups in any society.

Guidance and Counselling being at the centre of every human relationship, is of necessity to play a pivotal role in mediating and resolving conflicts among people, using various counselling strategies and techniques to facilitate effective communication, understanding and peaceful resolution of every matter that degenerates into conflict. However, effective conflict management skills are essential for promoting social cohesion and psychological well-beings

among people of diverse demographic characteristics which trained counsellors can instill in individuals or society at large.

Counsellors by their trainings and calling, are the professional individuals who have in-depth knowledge of psychological characteristics inherent in human natures through diverse counselling theories, counselling skills and techniques which can be applied to modify behaviours of individuals or groups to navigate through phases of conflict that arises in the course of relationship. Counsellors' roles are indeed plethora in this context, and they are applicable to all categories of people and situations. This is justified by the assertion made by a renowned professor of counselling psychology, Prof. Isaac Oludaisi Makinde in Idowu (2016) which stated that:

“.....Guidance and Counselling is based on the assumption that every individual in any given society has had, is having and will have one problem or the other that he or she alone could not solve.....”

The roles of guidance counsellors include but not limited to, ability to facilitate effective communication, fostering empathic understanding among people, and helping two or more parties to discover and understand the underlying factors in a hostile relationship. Living in peace and harmony among people of different interests remain the cornerstone of a prosperous society, in fact no society can develop without peace. This therefore makes a cardinal duty of trained counsellors through conflict management and preventive intervention. However, maintaining peace in society is a complex process and it involves many things.

According to Ghulum, Unsa, Sarfarz, Muhammed and Tooba (2023), to achieve an enduring peace in any society remains a difficult or herculean task that involves many activities or processes. The above source suggested that peaceful co-existence among people can be accomplished by a number of strategies and approaches such as diplomacy, mediation, conflict resolution and encouragement of flow communication and reconciliatory talk among conflicting parties. The authors in the above maintained further that the maintenance of peace is a task that involves all people in the society, as peace itself is a basic human ambition. Peace however, is a direct opposite of conflict and remains a multi-dimensional factor in the context of human relationship. There is point in arguing either Nigeria is experiencing conflict or not. The recent study conducted by Makinde, Olaoye and Alawode (2023) stated that conflict among people of Nigeria is something which needs to be urgently addressed.

In this context, guidance counsellors need to implore different counselling approaches such as client-centred, emotional regulation, deep relaxation, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), rational emotive therapy (REBT), and psychoanalysis among other therapeutic interventions to deal with conflict situations among people of Nigeria. However, the role of guidance counsellors in conflict management is particularly critical due to complexity of Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Kaduna State for example, has a diverse socio-cultural history. The state is known over the year for its ethno-religious tensions and conflict, which

poses challenges for guidance counsellors to apply appropriate counselling approaches at every level of relationship to guarantee peaceful co-existence among people. Moreover, understanding how professional counsellors in any region perceive counselling dimension to conflict management, will indeed provide valuable insights into the level of awareness of their responsibilities in this context.

Conflict in Kaduna State has become a consistent and reoccurring experience among its residents with different approaches used to tame its tiding waves seem to be ineffective enough. The need to look for alternative solutions such as counselling intervention is of great necessity. Various empirical studies have been conducted in relation to the variable of this study “conflict management” in the recent past for instance, Adewumi, Salami and Dogara (2021), Nwankwo (2010), Akinwale (2010), Obona (2021). However, it is crystal clear that previous studies to the best knowledge of researchers, left behind them certain gaps in terms of their locale, population, sample and timing which this study aimed to fill. Hence, this study investigated conflict management strategies, focusing specifically on the experiences and perceptions of guidance counsellors in Kaduna State, Nigeria. It also examined the moderating effect of gender, religion and mode of practice on the participants’ responses on the above subject matter.

Objectives of the Study

The present study stood on the following objectives:

1. To find out the conflict management strategies mostly adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State, Nigeria.
2. To examine whether gender, religion and mode of practice of the respondents have moderating effect on their responses.

Research Question

1. What are the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

- H0₁:** There is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State, Nigeria based on gender.
- H0₂:** There is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State, Nigeria based on religion.
- H0₃:** There is no significant difference in the strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in managing conflict among people in Kaduna State, Nigeria based on mode of practice.

Methodology

The present study employed descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey design allows the researchers to describe the opinion, characteristics, behaviours or attitude of the

respondents of their study which were selected from a fair large population in order to infer the outcome of their study on them. Hence, the descriptive design adopted for this study is considered appropriate for the study. However, one main research question was raised and answered in this study, while three null hypotheses were formulated and also tested. A researchers' design questionnaire with a title: "Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (CMSQ)" was used in this study. The instrument was face validated by five experts that is, senior lecturers in the fields of Peace and Strategic Studies, and Educational Psychology and Counselling. The CMSQ was also subjected to a Split-Half reliability test, and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86 was got from the test. This result affirmed that the instrument used for this study is reliable.

The above mentioned instrument consisted of two sections that is; section A and B. The section A comprises demographic data of the respondents which include; gender, religion and type of practice. Section B on the other hand, consists of 10 structured items that explore responses on the roles of counsellors in conflict management. The section A of the instrument was scored using frequency counts and percentage, while sections B which was patterned on four Likert-type scale was scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

For decision making on the response of the participant either it is positive or negative, the above scores were added together and divided by four as follows: $(1+2+3+4 = 10/4 = 2.5)$. However, any score that is above 2.5 was considered as positive response while any score that is below it was regarded as positive response. The population for this study consisted of all guidance counsellors practicing in both private and public sector in Kaduna State. Their figure was put as 378 (Field Survey, 2023) from which a total sample size of 120 were selected to participate in the study using both the stratified and sample random techniques. The researchers employed both descriptive and inferential statistics for the data analysis. The demographic data were analysed by frequency count and percentage, research question was answered by mean and rank order and finally, the hypotheses were tested by t-test statistic under 0.05 level of significance. The data analysis was carried by the researchers using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25.

Table 1: Distributions of Participants’ Demographic Characteristics

N	Variables		Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Gender	Male	68	57.0
		Female	52	43.0
		Total	120	100.0
2.	Religion	Christianity	37	31.0
		Islam	83	69.0
		Total	120	100.0
3.	Mode of Practice	Private	34	28.0
		Public	86	72.0
		Total	120	100.0

Table 1 presents the participants’ demographic information. The table indicated that 120 participants involved in the study. 68 (57.0%) were male, while 52 (43.0%) were female participants hence, more than half (57.0%) of the participants were male. Regards to religion practice of the participants, only Christians and Muslims practitioners were reported. This indicated that 37 (31.0%) were Christians while 83 (69.0%) were Muslims. However, no participant was reported practicing African Traditional Religion (ATR) based on the result of the analysis. On the mode of practice adopted by the participants, 34 (28.0%) were practicing in the private sector, while 86 (72.0%) were in the public sector.

Research Question 1: What are the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of Participants' Responses on the Conflict Management Strategies

S/N	Items:	Mean	SD	Rank Order
2.	Using empathic understanding to resolve conflict that arises among people	2.86	1.22	1 st
10.	Encourage open communication among parties involved	2.84	1.20	2 nd
5.	Apply appropriate counselling technique (e.g. cognitive restructuring) to change behaviour	2.83	1.99	3 rd
7.	To facilitate active listening among conflicting parties	2.80	1.96	4 th
3.	Apply collaborative problem-solving skills to resolve crisis among worrying parties	2.79	1.89	5 th
9.	Use appropriate standardized tests to establish genesis of conflict among people	2.77	1.77	6 th
1.	Using unconditional positive regards to resolve strained relationship structure	2.72	1.70	7 th
4.	Analysing communication styles among people	2.68		
8.	Setting of appropriate goals to stir up individual commitment	2.64	0.99	8 th
6.	Promoting personal responsibilities among people in conflict situation	2.62	1.72	9 th
			1.75	10 th
Overall Average Mean Score		2.76		

From Table 2, items 2, 10 and 5 with statements such as; using empathic understanding to resolve conflict among people, encourage open communication among parties involved, and apply appropriate counselling techniques (e.g. cognitive restructuring), and they were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. The rank table on the other hand, indicated that items 4, 8 and 6 with statements such as; analysing communication styles among people, setting of appropriate goals to stir up individual commitment, and promoting personal responsibilities among people in conflict situation, make the least responded to items on the rank table and as such; they were ranked 8th, 9th and 10th respectively. The entire items on the rank order indicated positive responses from the respondents based on the fact that none of the 10 presented items falls short of 2.5 mean score which was initially set as the benchmark for making decision.

Hypotheses Testing

In the present study, three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and their results are presented as follows:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on gender.

Table 3: Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Respondents’ Responses Based on Gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t	p-value	Decision
Male	68	32.78	3.20	118	2.33*	1.98	0.021	Rejected
Female	52	28.86	3.89					

*Significant, $p<0.05$

Table 3 shows that for a df of 118, the calculated t-value of 2.33 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.021 which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is significant difference in the in conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors based on gender. Hence, the hypothesis one which stated that there is no significant difference in conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on gender was rejected. This implies that male and female guidance counsellors differ in their responses on the strategies used for conflict management in the society.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on religion.

Table 4: Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Participants’ Responses Based on Religion.

Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t	p-value	Decision
Christianity	37	24.66	6.40	118	1.83	1.98	0.069	Accepted
Islam	82	30.45	7.68					

Table 4 shows that for a df of 118, the calculated t-value of 1.83 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.069 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This result suggests that there is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors based on religion. Hence, the hypothesis two which stated that there is no significant difference in conflict management

strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on religion was accepted. This result implies further that both Christian and Muslim guidance counsellors in Kaduna State were not different in their responses on conflict management strategies that they used among people in the society.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on mode of practice.

Table 5: Mean, SD and t-test Result Showing Difference in Participants’ Responses Based on Mode of Practice.

Mode of Practice	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t	Crit. t	p-value	Decision
Private	34	22.80	7.90	118	1.95	1.98	0.052	Accepted
Public	86	30.92	10.60					

Table 5 shows that for a df of 118, the calculated t-value of 1.95 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98, with a corresponding p-value of 0.052 which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This result indicates that there is no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors based on the mode of practice. Hence, the hypothesis three which stated that there is no significant difference in conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on the mode of practice was accepted. This implies further that the respondents were not differing in their responses on the conflict management strategies adopted by guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on mode of practice.

Discussion

The first result of this study suggested that counsellors’ roles in conflict management are well perceived among guidance counsellors in Kaduna State and the common roles as expressed by them are; using empathic understanding to resolve conflict among people, encourage open communication among parties involved, and apply appropriate counselling techniques (For example, cognitive restructuring counselling technique). These results supported the previous findings of Olga (2019); Michal, Shiri and Shiri (2022), who discovered in their studies that empathy is used by counsellors to manage conflict, and Oachesu (2016) and Amaka and Amaka (2016) studies also resolved that communications are used to manage conflicts among people, and finally, Frey, Buhler and Ruppert (2022) whose study affirmed that cognitive approach was used by counsellors to manage conflicts.

The hypothesis one tested in this study revealed that there was difference in the expression of the respondents on the conflict management strategies adopted by the guidance counsellors in Kaduna State on the basis of gender. This finding supported the findings of

Dildar and Amjad (2017) whose study revealed a difference in the conflict management strategies used by male and female individuals. This results however, contradicts the findings of Aigboje and Uwaifor (2013) who noticed no difference in their respondents' views on conflict management strategies. The second hypothesis tested revealed that there was no significant difference in the strategies adopted by the guidance counsellors in conflict management in Kaduna State based on religion. This finding was aligned with the finding of the study of Ettang and Ogunnubi (2018) who had earlier discovered that Christians and Muslims were not different in their approaches to maintain peace in Plateau State. Lastly, the hypothesis three tested also revealed that there was no significant difference in the conflict management strategies adopted by the guidance counsellors in Kaduna State based on the mode of their practice. This finding was in tandem with the finding of the study of Din, Khan, Rehman and Bibi (2011) whose study unveiled that professionals in both the public and private universities were not differ in their strategies of managing conflict in their respective institutions. The findings of the present study therefore build on the already existing knowledge and make available new facts on the subject matter as presented above.

Implication for Peaceful Co-existence among People

The adoption of counselling approaches to mediate among people in conflict situation cannot be overemphasized. Traditionally, counselling is at centre of human relationship. Counsellors by their calling are professionals in all sectors of human relationship and they are so trained to facilitate adaptive relationship among people not only during this period, but after the conflict through post counselling feedback effect. Counselling applies long lasting approaches to resolve all matters that result into conflict or crises among people and is striving towards re-engineering relationship into productive type without reducing quality of life from either side of the conflicting parties. Applying counselling approaches to manage conflict among people has proved a surpassing results among other methods used in the same situations.

Conclusion

From the results of this study, it was concluded that male and female counsellors differ in their responses on the roles of counsellors in conflict management. It is also concluded that gender has moderating effect on the respondents' responses on the subject matter, while both religion and mode of practice did have such moderating effect.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Guidance and counselling practitioners should make use of different counselling approaches such as, empathy, open communication, and cognitive restructuring to manage conflict among parties that involved in a conflict.
2. The female practitioners should be encouraged to apply appropriate counselling approaches to resolve conflict like their male counterparts.

3. Counsellors irrespective of their religious affiliations should help people resolve their conflicts using counselling based interventions.
4. The practitioners in the field of guidance and counselling irrespective of their mode of practice, should be deeply involved in conflict management using evident based counselling therapeutic approaches.

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STUDENTS' ADOPTION AND PARTICIPATION IN E-LEARNING DIGITAL APPLICATIONS DURING COVID-19: A COUNSELLING PERSPECTIVE FROM TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined students' adoption and participation in e-learning digital applications tertiary institutions in Delta State during the COVID-19 crisis. Guided by two research questions and corresponding null hypotheses tested at the 0.05 significance level, the study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population consisted of 1,890 students from two institutions, with a final sample of 330 respondents selected through a multistage sampling process. Data was collected using the Students' Adoption of E-Learning Applications Scale (SAEAS) and Students' Participation in E-Learning Digital Applications Scale (SPEAS), which were adapted and validated by measurement experts. The instruments' reliability, determined by using Cronbach's Alpha, yielded a coefficient of 0.72. Analytical tools included mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-tests. Findings revealed a high level of adoption and participation in e-learning digital applications among students at both institutions. No significant statistical difference was identified between the two institutions. Based on these results, the study recommends structured seminars and workshops to enhance the ICT proficiency of students and lecturers by the institutional authorities.

Keywords: E learning adoption, e-teaching, student participation, COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in shaping individuals into responsible, respectable, and productive members of society. It fosters character development, behavioural modification, and value orientation through the intentional transmission of knowledge and skills within a cultural context, particularly among the youth (Ohaka & Akpomi, 2018). Schools serve as key social institutions designed to fulfil this mandate, shaping children's attitudes, emotions, and behaviours while perpetuating cultural norms, beliefs, and practices across generations (Aljawarneh, 2020). As structured organizations, schools influence students' learning behaviours and instil discipline through formal instruction, guidance, and support.

The emergence of COVID-19 in late 2019 triggered a global health and education crisis.

Educational activities in over 180 countries, including Nigeria, were severely disrupted (McIntosh et al., 2020). Before this era, most Nigerian schools operated using conventional face-to-face instructional methods within physical spaces such as classrooms, lecture halls, and faculty offices. These environments were equipped with the necessary infrastructure like classrooms, desks, chairs, and teaching boards—to support effective learning.

Following the World Health Organization's pandemic declaration on March 11, 2020, Nigerian higher education institutions suspended academic activities, affecting over 1.6 million students (Zaheer & Munir, 2020). The pandemic's sudden onset generated profound emotional and professional challenges. In response, public health authorities implemented several containment measures, including early detection, patient isolation, contact tracing, public quarantine, and nationwide lockdowns (Ezeugo et al., 2020). These measures disrupted in-person education, introduced barriers to home-based learning, and exposed limitations in educational technology, as well as gaps in digital literacy among teachers, students, and parents (Eze et al., 2021).

To sustain academic operations and prevent the total collapse of the educational system, many Nigerian educational institutions transitioned to alternative modes of instruction. These included online teaching, evaluation, counselling, and research supervision. However, effective implementation depended heavily on institutional disposition to integration, students' prior exposure to ICT, their attitudes toward digital learning modalities, and the availability of technological infrastructure.

E-learning refers to the delivery of educational curriculum through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools such as internet-based platforms and multimedia (Arinze et al., 2020). It facilitates the development and administration of educational materials, offering flexibility and accessibility across various contexts, including those constrained by geography, time, or health-related challenges (Aboagye et al., 2020). ICT enhances educational outcomes by fostering innovation, improving instructional quality, and offering expanded learning opportunities. According to the E-Learning Acceptance Model (ELAM), user behaviour is influenced primarily by perceived usefulness, ease of use, social expectations, and available support systems.

Online learning also enables students to pursue degrees remotely, providing flexibility in scheduling and access to instructional resources. It reduces administrative burdens such as attendance tracking and lecture preparation while promoting asynchronous and self-directed learning. E-learning encompasses various forms of digital instruction, including computer-assisted learning, web-based education, and interactive digital content. Nonetheless, it contributes significantly to knowledge acquisition, collaborative learning, information retention, and educational quality (Arinze et al., 2020). Despite its benefits, many students remain unaware of its critical role in the broader academic experience.

Studies have explored the integration and effectiveness of e-learning. Aboagye et al.

(2020) investigated e-learning challenges of students during the pandemic, concluding that the hybrid approach of combining online and face-to-face instruction would be beneficial. Ezeugo et al. (2020), similarly studied the use of ICT-enabled tools by 450 academic staff members in Anambra State, revealing widespread integration of digital tools for academic supervision. Ali et al. (2018) found that 98% of surveyed students considered e-learning useful, with analyses showing that learners perceived it as affordable, time-efficient, accessible, and user-friendly. Radha et al. (2020) studied tech-savvy students and confirmed the gross usage of e-learning platforms during the COVID-19 lockdown. Agu and Odimegwu (2014) surveyed ten doctoral students in southeastern Nigeria, concluding that traditional face-to-face supervision remained the preferred method. Nonetheless, the pandemic necessitated a broader and more effective integration of ICT into academic instruction.

Against this backdrop, the present study from a counselling viewpoint investigated students' adoption and participation in e-learning in tertiary institutions in Delta State during the COVID era in Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The urgency of integrating ICT into educational delivery systems has been the subject of numerous concerns in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 epidemic, which compelled schools to implement online platforms for learning. This circumstance forced educational bodies to make significant investments in ICT tools to improve the input, output, and general usage of learners.

Despite the proven utility of ICT applications in facilitating efficient data dissemination and learner participation, existing literature reveals that research on e-learning adoption, student acceptance, participation, and institutional support for ICT in learning remains insufficient, especially in Nigeria and other developing countries. This gap is majorly evident in the limited understanding of how students adapt in technology-enhanced learning environments in the context of emergency-driven transitions.

The pandemic-driven shift posed considerable challenges for students who were required to rapidly acquire new technological competencies to participate effectively in the digital learning space. This situation underscored the urgent need to investigate how students navigated these changes and to what extent they embraced and utilized e-learning applications in their academic pursuits. Therefore, the study sought to investigate students' adoption and participation in e-learning among tertiary institutions in Delta State during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the following:

- (i) students' adoption of e-learning digital applications during the Covid-19 pandemic in tertiary institutions in Delta State,

- (ii) students' participation in e-learning digital applications during the Covid-19 pandemic in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following questions were raised:

- (i) To what extent did students at the Delta State University, Abraka and the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, differ in their adoption of e-learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- (ii) To what extent did students at the Delta State University, Abraka and the Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, differ in their participation in e-learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed and put to test at the significance level of 0.05:

- H₀₁**: There is no significant statistical difference in the adoption of e-learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic among students in Delta State University and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in Delta State.
- H₀₂**: There is no significant statistical difference in the participation in e-learning applications during the COVID-19 pandemic among students in Delta State University, Abraka and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in Delta State.

Methodology

This survey design was deemed appropriate for collecting data on students' adoption and participation in e-learning applications during the COVID-19 epidemic. The study population comprised 1890 undergraduate students from Delta State University, Abraka and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. Out of tertiary institutions in the state during the 2023–2024 academic session. Taro-Yamane’s sample size determinant was used to obtain 330 respondents. The multi-stage sampling approach was also used in three phases to pick a sample. At stage one, two tertiary institutions (DELSU and DSPG) were purposively selected based on their existing ICT infrastructure and active participation in e-learning. Using a straightforward balloting process, the second stage chose five departments each from DELSU and DSPG. Finally, from each of the selected departments, 165 students were randomly chosen using a lottery method, yielding a total sample size of 330 students. Data collection was conducted using two structured instruments adapted from Ezeugo et al. (2021): Students’ Adoption of E-Learning Applications Scale (SAEAS) and Students’ Participation in E-Learning Digital Applications Scale (SPEAS). There were two portions of the instruments: A and B. Respondents' personal information was included in Section A, while Section B measured students’ adoption and participation in digital applications in e-learning contexts. SAEAS and SPEAS are both ten-item, four-point Likert-type scales. The response options were categorized as follows: Very High Adoption (VHA), High Adoption (HA), Low Adoption (LA), Very Low

Adoption (VLA) for SAEAS and Very High Range (VHR), High Range (HR), Low Range (LR), Very Low Range (VLR) for SPEAS.

The instruments were subjected to a revalidation process using a pilot sample of 20 respondents from Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, to ensure internal consistency. The Cronbach Alpha yielded 0.72 and 0.83 reliability coefficients, respectively. These values confirmed the reliability of the instruments for the main study. With the assistance of trained research aids, 80 copies of the instruments were distributed directly to the participants. An on-the-spot completion method was adopted to prevent data loss and ensure a 100% return rate. Descriptive statistics of standard deviation and mean were used to analyze the data, and a benchmark of 2.50 was established for accepting the mean score. Great participation/high range was defined as any weighted mean score of 2.50 or higher, whereas low participation/low range was defined as scores below 2.50. A robust data analysis was provided by testing the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results

Research Question One: To what extent did students at the Delta State University, Abraka and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, differ in their adoption of e-learning digital applications during the COVID-19 epidemic?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Adoption of E-Learning Digital Applications During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Digital Applications	Institution	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Email	DELSU	165	3.15	1.10	Adopted
	DSPG	165	3.25	1.49	
Telegram	DELSU	165	3.50	1.22	Adopted
	DSPG	165	3.00	0.88	
Google Meet	DELSU	165	3.70	1.17	Adopted
	DSPG	165	3.25	1.12	
Zoom	DELSU	165	3.50	0.99	Adopted
	DSPG	165	3.20	1.09	
Facebook	DELSU	165	2.07	1.41	Not adopted
	DSPG	165	1.90	1.08	
Twitter	DELSU	165	2.40	1.94	Not adopted
	DSPG	165	2.25	1.12	
WhatsApp	DELSU	165	2.65	1.16	Adopted
	DSPG	165	2.75	1.32	
WEBEX	DELSU	165	1.10	0.33	Not adopted
	DSPG	165	1.00	0.63	
Instagram	DELSU	165	2.32	0.07	Not adopted
	DSPG	165	1.50	0.45	
Youtube	DELSU	165	3.07	0.26	Adopted
	DSPG	165	2.52	0.15	

Table 1 demonstrates the descriptive study of DELSU and DSPG adoption of e-learning digital applications. Email, Telegram, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Zoom, and YouTube are the digital applications that, according to the above table, achieved the 2.50 and above standard. Six out of ten digital applications— Email, Telegram, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Zoom and YouTube —were adopted by DELSU and DSPG students, according to the findings, while Facebook, Twitter, Webex and Instagram were not adopted. From a closer perspective, the social media application was not widely adopted. Testing for the examination of major variations in adaptation between these two tertiary institutions is shown in Hypothesis 1.

Research Question Two: To what extent do students at the Delta State University, Abraka and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, differ in their participation in e-learning digital applications during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Participation in E-Learning Digital Applications During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Digital Tools	Institution	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
Email	DELSU	165	3.73	0.69	High
	DSPG	165	2.97	1.09	
Telegram	DELSU	165	3.21	1.17	High
	DSPG	165	3.33	0.91	
Google Meet	DELSU	165	2.79	1.55	High
	DSPG	165	2.67	1.50	
Zoom	DELSU	165	3.16	1.19	High
	DSPG	165	3.96	1.27	
Facebook	DELSU	165	1.69	0.96	Low
	DSPG	165	1.50	0.89	
Twitter	DELSU	165	2.16	1.14	Low
	DSPG	165	1.01	0.99	
WhatsApp	DELSU	165	3.31	0.71	High
	DSPG	165	3.33	0.98	
WEBEX	DELSU	165	2.19	0.55	Low
	DSPG	165	1.19	0.51	
Instagram	DELSU	165	1.31	0.71	Low
	DSPG	165	1.52	0.77	
Youtube	DELSU	165	3.07	0.27	High
	DSPG	165	3.02	0.54	

The descriptive analysis of the variety of digital applications used by DELSU and DSPG is shown by the data in Table 2 above. The digital applications that achieved the 2.50 benchmark and above are e-mail, Telegram, Google Meet, Zoom, WhatsApp, and YouTube. This means that six out of the 10 digital applications (Email, Telegram, Google Meet, Zoom, WhatsApp, and YouTube) were found to be heavily utilized by students of DELSU and DSPG. Comparatively, during COVID-19, students of both tertiary institutions made extensive use of six out of the ten digital applications. The remaining applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, Webex, and Instagram, were seldom ever utilised. Hypothesis two reveals that there is a significant statistical difference in the participation of students in these two tertiary institutions.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant difference in the adoption of digital applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic among students in Delta State University and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in Delta State.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-Test of Significant Statistical Difference of E-Learning Digital Applications Adoption During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Variables	N		SD	df	t-value	t-Crit.	Sig. 2-tailed
Delsu	165	29.52	2.67	328	3.720	1.96	.068
Dspg	165	28.65	3.21				

Table 3 demonstrates the independent sample t-test analysis of the statistically significant difference in the adoption of e-learning digital applications during the COVID-19 epidemic among students at DELSU and DSPG. At the 0.05 level of significance, there is no substantial difference between the two institutions (df = 328, t = 3.720, p = 0.068). The reason is that the p-value is more than the significance value of 0.05. It suggests that the null hypothesis, which posits that "students of DELSU and DSPG did not significantly differ in their adoption of e-learning digital applications during the COVID-19 epidemic," is retained.

This finding indicated that both DELSU and DSPG students demonstrated comparable levels of adoption of digital tools during the epidemic. Nevertheless, a comparison of the mean and standard deviation scores indicates a slightly higher adoption level among students of DELSU and DSPG (M = 29.52, SD = 2.67) compared to those at the (M = 28.65, SD = 3.21). While this difference is not statistically significant, it may point to a marginally greater participation in digital-based learning tools among DELSU students.

H₀₂: There is no statistically significant difference in the participation in e-learning digital applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 epidemic among students at DELSU and DSPG.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-Test of Significant Difference in Participation in E-Learning Digital Applications During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Variables	N		SD	df	t-value	t-Crit.	Sig. 2-tailed
DELSU	165	29.52	2.67	328	4.639	1.96	.114
DSPG	165	28.65	3.21				

Table 4. The independent sample t-test analysis of the significant statistical difference in the participation in e-learning digital applications by students at DELSU and DSPG during the

COVID-19 epidemic is shown in Table 4 above. At the 0.05 level of significance, the data are $df = 328$, $t = 4.639$, and $p = 0.114$. The p-value is greater than the significance value of 0.05. This indicates that the two tertiary institutions' use of digital applications for e-learning activities does not differ significantly. This suggests that the null hypothesis, which states that "students at DELSU did not significantly differ in their use of digital applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 epidemic," is retained. This indicates that during the COVID-19 epidemic, there are no appreciable differences between DELSU and DSPG students' participation in digital programs for e-learning. The mean and standard deviation ratings for the two institutions, however, indicate that DELSU used more digital applications than DSPG (DELSU = 22.45, 2.67 and DSPG = 21.60, 3.24).

Accordingly, the null hypothesis—that there is no statistically significant difference in the engagement of ICT applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic among students in Delta State University and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku in Delta State, is accepted. This outcome suggests that both institutions employed ICT tools for e-learning to a comparable extent. Nonetheless, the descriptive statistics indicate that students from DELSU ($M = 29.52$, $SD = 2.67$) reported slightly higher engagement with digital applications compared to students from DSPG ($M = 28.65$, $SD = 3.21$), though the difference is not statistical significance.

Discussion

These findings of the study indicate that students from both DELSU and DSPG adopted e-learning digital applications during the COVID-19 epidemic. This result suggests that there was no significant statistical difference in students' adoption of digital applications of the two institutions, underscoring a broad readiness among Nigerian students to adopt digital technologies in education.

It also illustrates how school teaching and learning are progressively moving towards a digital format. However, during the COVID-19 epidemic, the terrible consequences of not being able to interact physically with classmates and lecturers forced these students to embrace using digital applications for learning in compliance with the World Health Organization triple protocol (lockdown, social distancing, and isolation).

The findings align with those of Ezeugo et al. (2021), who observed that ICT tools were welcomed by lecturers, particularly for tasks such as research supervision.

Although the statistical analysis did not reveal significant differences, descriptive statistics indicated a slightly higher level of digital applications among DELSU students compared to their DSPG counterparts. These findings challenge earlier assumptions, such as those suggested by Wood (2021) that students in scientific and technical disciplines might be more inclined toward online learning platforms. Instead, it appears that the urgency created by the pandemic fostered comparable levels of ICT adoption across academic disciplines and institutions.

Regarding the second research question and its corresponding hypothesis, the data

similarly revealed no significant difference in the actual engagement of ICT digital applications for e-learning between the two student populations (DELSU and DSPG). This uniformity in usage could be attributed to a general rise in digital literacy among students, regardless of their academic backgrounds. Moreover, both universities appeared to have adopted and implemented WHO-recommended safety measures and digital learning strategies effectively. These findings are consistent with those of Ali et al. (2018), who reported that a large majority of students found e-learning tools to be affordable, user-friendly, and efficient.

Conclusion

This study concludes that students at both Delta State University and Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-uku, demonstrated significant adoption and engagement of ICT digital applications for e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Delta State University students exhibited a marginally higher engagement with ICT tools, the overall difference in usage between the two institutions was not statistically significant.

The findings highlight the transformative impact of the pandemic on higher education, particularly in fostering digital learning environments. The experience has demonstrated the potential of ICT to support flexible, accessible, and efficient learning, offering students the ability to access educational resources beyond geographical and temporal constraints. As education systems continue to evolve post-COVID-19, the strategic integration of ICT tools into curricula remains essential to sustaining and enhancing learning outcomes in Nigerian universities and beyond.

Recommendations

- **Capacity Building through Training Programmes:** School administrators should organize regular conferences, workshops, and seminars to educate both students and faculty members on the importance, benefits, and effective use of ICT digital applications for e-learning.
- **Provision of Infrastructure and Internet Access:** To support continuous academic advancement, both governmental and private educational stakeholders should invest in the provision of up-to-date ICT digital infrastructure. Additionally, ensuring consistent and high-speed internet connectivity is essential for the effective implementation of e-learning systems.
- **Stable Electricity Supply:** A reliable and uninterrupted power supply is crucial for the successful deployment of ICT tools in education. The government, in collaboration with relevant power authorities, should work toward improving electricity availability in educational institutions.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Educational planners should integrate ICT literacy and competency training into curricula at all levels of the educational system to foster long-term digital proficiency among learners and educators.

Counselling Implications

- **Counselling intervention for academic excellence in schools** should integrate the use of ICT digital tools. This is to enable them to help students and teachers in the use of ICT digital applications for effective and efficient delivery of curriculum content.
- **Promotion of Constructive ICT Use:** Counselling activities should target and guide students toward the responsible use of ICT resources, encouraging their application for academic enrichment rather than for unproductive or unethical activities.
- **Integration of E-Counselling Services:** School counselling programmes should incorporate e-counselling as a strategic component, thereby broadening access to psychological and academic support services via digital platforms.
- **Orientation and Digital Awareness:** During student orientation programmes, counsellors should introduce and promote the educational benefits of ICT applications, fostering early awareness and positive engagement with e-learning tools.

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SELF-REGULATED LEARNING AS STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC MOTIVATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Lack of self-regulation has been found to be a major cause of underachievement when students are unable to control their own behaviour. Self-regulation is the self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions for achieving goals. This study examined self-regulated learning as strategy for improving undergraduates' academic motivation in Nigeria. To explain how self-regulated learning can be used as a strategy to increase undergraduates' academic motivation, the social cognitive theory approach was used. According to self-regulated learning, which was founded on social cognitive theory, learning is impacted by behavioural and environmental events in addition to internal processes. To help increase undergraduates' academic motivation, counsellors can implement a variety of counselling techniques based on the self-regulated learning model's instructional strategies. In order to guarantee undergraduates' academic motivation, counsellors in Nigerian universities have a variety of responsibilities related to self-regulated learning. Using the instructional strategies, counsellors may need to teach undergraduates certain skills like goal setting, reading, study skills among others. In line with the tenets of this paper, it was suggested that, there should be a defining guideline for universities in Nigeria to help in encouraging undergraduates to be academically motivated counsellors in universities should adopt self-regulated learning framework to counsel students, counsellors should counsel parents on ways to motivate their undergraduates' children towards academics and counsellors in the universities should assist the undergraduates to develop skills to be able to self-regulate in the process of learning.

Keywords: Academic Motivation, Undergraduate, Counselling, Strategy, and Self-Regulated Learning.

Introduction

Self-regulated learning is an important educational concept that has been accepted by parents, students, teachers, and educational administrators. Self-regulation is the capacity to cultivate attitudes, abilities, and knowledge that can be applied to a range of learning contexts and from the learning circumstance in which the knowledge has been learned to leisure and professional settings. Many of the leading educational psychologists have developed cross-sectional and longitudinal studies and as well proposed theoretical models to explain self-regulated learning in a way that is both theoretically and practically relevant. The purpose of this paper was to highlight self-regulated learning as a strategy for improving undergraduates' academic motivation.

According to Kitsantas (2002), self-regulation denotes the capacity to manage one's own cognitive processes, emotions, and actions with the intention of attaining objectives. The absence of self-regulation in students has been identified as a prominent factor leading to underperformance. In the context of academic task completion, self-regulated learners have been noted to demonstrate self-constraint, self-restraint, and self-guidance. Self-regulated learning has consequently emerged as a key area of study in many educational fields worldwide (Tavakolizadeh & Ebrahimi-Qavam, 2011).

In order to establish favourable learning environments at various learning stages, self-regulated learners engage in planning, self-inspection, self-control, and self-evaluation (Walters, 2003). Self-regulated learners use various cognitive strategies, such as repetition, rehearsal, elaboration, and organization, to improve their comprehension and memory when completing academic tasks. When these techniques are used successfully, the student can feel independent and valuable when completing their coursework (Tavakolizadeh & Ebrahimi-Qavam, 2011). It has been discovered that a student's academic success can be predicted in part by the relationship between academic motivation and self-regulated learning (Kitsantas, 2002).

Academically motivated students exhibit a higher interest in learning and are more likely to finish their assignments (Artino & Stephens, 2009). People agreed that it is a crucial part of education, academic achievement is higher among motivated students. (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-concept is one of the important motivating factors that is closely related to self-regulation techniques (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). According to Pajares (2000), people who have a strong sense of self-worth are industrious, persistent, and more tolerant when it comes to solving cognitive problems. In order to learn the problem and improve their own academic efficiency, students who employ self-regulation techniques more often attempt to give the information meaning or a logical connection to earlier information. They also manage this process and create an appropriate learning environment. In other words, students are conscious of the caliber of their learning through the use of metacognitive techniques (self-questioning, self-control, and self-assessment) (Hammed, 2023).

Self-regulation capability makes it possible for the learner to observe and control his/her

own behaviour. In this position paper, social cognitive theory approach was adopted to explain how self-regulated learning can serve as a counselling strategy for improving undergraduates' academic motivation.

Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation (Bandura, 1986)

Social Cognitive Theory started as the Social Learning Theory in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. The Social Cognitive Theory emerged in 1986. Bandura contends that learning takes place in a social setting where behaviour, surroundings, and people interact dynamically and reciprocally.

View of Human Nature

Social Cognitive Theory is distinctive in that it emphasizes social influence, which includes both internal and external social reinforcement. Along with taking into account the social context in which people engage in the behavior, the theory also examined the distinctive ways in which people learn and sustain certain behaviors. In order to determine whether a behavioral action will be taken, the theory considers an individual's prior experiences.

According to Kalenda and Vavrova (2016), these past experiences have an effect on expectations, expectancies, and reinforcements, all of which affect a person's propensity to engage in a specific behavior as well as the reasons behind it. By using control and reinforcement, people can achieve goal-directed behavior that they can sustain over time. This is the aim of social cognitive theory.

Self-regulated Learning as Strategy to Improve Academic Motivation

It has been demonstrated that the explicit instructional model of self-regulated learning helps undergraduates develop their learning strategies (Dorrenbacher & Perels, 2016).

The Self-Regulated Learning strategies are:

- ◆ *Cognitive strategies:* Lehmann, Hähnlein, and Ifenthaler (2014) stated that cognitive strategies are basically internal processes that represent and process information. They are a particular kind of self-regulated learning technique. The cognitive strategies instruction model for self-regulated learning consists of organized practice, elaborated practice, and elaboration.
- ◆ *Meta-cognitive strategies:* These are the exceptional abilities that students have to direct and regulate their behavior, motivation, and mental processes in order to achieve particular goals, like planning and management (Perels, Merget Kullmann, Wende, Schmitz & Buchbinder, 2009).
- ◆ *Motivational strategies:* This entails learners' persistent pursuit to understanding and interpreting factors that instigate them to engage in activities related to the learning process, aiming at academic success. It encompasses the students' self-evaluation of their competence and the estimation of the worth of the task content, such as self-awareness and

self-perception (Paris, Byrnes & Paris, 2001).

- ◆ *Behavioural strategies*: People can currently observe, track, and manage their behavior, which enables them to control it. The tactics include time management and seeking assistance.
- ◆ *Contextual strategies*: Learners must deal with uncertain and uncontrollable conditions when putting contextual strategies into practice.

Students have to deal with contextual differences such as different classroom or instruction formats, both traditional and focused on the student. Several Counselling intervention plans can be implemented to enhance undergraduates' academic motivation based on the self-regulated learning model's instructional strategies.

Counselling Use of Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulated learning can be used to increase undergraduates' academic motivation in a number of ways. The strategies can be differentiated in a specific and global way based on their scope, content, and time frame. The tactics called for behavioral, motivational, metacognitive, and cognitive approaches. According to Andrzejewski, Davis, Bruening, and Poirier (2016) and Gu & Lee (2019), these strategies aim to help students become proficient in the self-regulated learning strategy while also enhancing academic motivation and performance.

Counselling as a helping profession has some counselling skills and techniques through which a student could be exposed in order to overcome challenges and issues in academics. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, many basic tactics can be employed by counsellors to help students improve on learning. Counsellors can assist undergraduates and guide them on how to develop self-regulated learning skills that will improve the academic performance of the students.

Strategies are planned designs for controlling and manipulating specific information, modes of operation for accomplishing a specific end, or specific methods of approaching a problem or task, according to Brown (2000). Researchers discovered a number of fundamental techniques for raising academic motivation using a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches such as:

Learning from Lecture: Students are expected to learn the lecturer's materials through lecture speech and text writing when they are expected to comprehend and benefit from the educational process in schools. Students can enhance their academic performance by using note-taking strategies, which involve writing down the lecturer's points and facts in order to understand and replicate the information (Van Der Meer, 2012).

Learning from Reading: This is done to help students understand and make connections between the readings. In order to help students fully comprehend what they read, the SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) reading strategy is used in this session (Feldt & Hensley, 2009).

Learning from the Discussion: Gaining knowledge through discussion is when students have a firm understanding of the classroom discussion process and are able to actively participate using the techniques they have acquired. The approach that backs this up is for students to develop the habit of enhancing class discussion (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2013).

Self-Management: Self-management is the process by which students feel compelled to think about environmental management and are able to accomplish their objectives. Goal-setting, organizing the study space, and asking for assistance are the tactics that help this session (Newman, 2008).

Writing Strategies: Students must be able to comprehend and utilize the writing process using a technique that they can control. Writing is primarily used to learn the lecturer's material, which explains students' ideas in detail (Burns & Sinfield, 2012).

Motivational Strategies: Students can better understand the factors that actively drive their learning when they learn from motivation. This session is supported by the following strategies: emotional regulation, interest enhancement, mastery self-talk, self-concept, environment structuring, and the CRAFT method (cancel, replace, affirm, focus, train) (Pintrich, 2000).

Roles of Counsellors in Self-Regulated Learning

In Nigerian universities; counsellors play a variety of roles in promoting self-regulated learning and ensuring undergraduates' academic motivation. Counsellors might need to teach undergraduates the following skills using the highlighted strategies: note-taking, reading, study, and mastery skills; writing for exams; goal-setting; time management; emotional regulation; comprehension; help-seeking; and self-management. Acquiring all of these skills would help undergraduates become more academically motivated and be able to control their learning.

Conclusion

Self-regulated learners must be proactive and goal-oriented, and they must control their motivation, thoughts, and actions while learning, according to the description of self-regulated learning. By using techniques like organizing, planning, tracking, and assessing their learning processes, self-regulated learners control their cognitive processes.

They demonstrate self-control over their motivation by considering themselves capable. Additionally, by choosing, organizing, and establishing settings that support efficient learning, they control their behaviour. Undergraduates set learning goals and then produce the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors necessary to achieve those goals in order to ensure self-regulated learning.

To be able to self-regulate, students must comprehend and value what drives them to do so, what processes can help them become self-aware, how their socio-cultural environment influences their self-regulation, which cognitive, affective, and motivational processes contribute to their self-regulation, and how they can become self-regulatory. In order to develop successful motivational techniques and self-regulatory learning strategies that improve

academic success, it is essential to use individual goal setting in conjunction with appropriate feedback from counselors and teachers. An effective program called self-regulated learning strategies intervention aims to improve students' cognitive, metacognitive, behavioral, motivational, and contextual skills.

Undergraduates who possess self-regulated learning skills will not only understand the value of being achievers, but they will also be inspired to develop these skills in order to improve their academic performance. The techniques encourage undergraduates to better plan, track, manage, and evaluate their actions in order to increase their motivation for learning.

Suggestions

Based on this expository paper, the following suggestions were made:

1. There should be a defining guideline for universities in Nigeria to help in encouraging undergraduates to be academically motivated.
2. Counsellors should counsel parents on ways to motivate their undergraduates' children towards academics.
3. Counsellors in the universities should assist the undergraduates to develop skills to be able to self-regulate in the process of learning.
4. Undergraduates should also develop abilities to effectively learn, set realistic academic goals and be self-motivated in the learning processes.

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INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG KWARA STATE MARRIED CIVIL SERVANTS IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of demographic factors on Domestic Violence among Kwara State Married Civil Servants, Ilorin, Nigeria. The population of the study was 36,048 Civil Servants in Kwara State. The sample size was 384 participants using Sloving method of population size determination. Randomization and purposive sampling techniques were used to select respondents and 20 Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in Ilorin, Nigeria respectively. The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2), a 39 items instrument was adopted to elicit relevant information from respondents. The scale has a reliability of cronbach alpha = 0.95. Results showed a significant difference in Domestic Violence experiences among Kwara State Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on Age, Gender, Religion, Economic Status and Level of educational attainment. Specifically, older participants reported higher level of Domestic Violence ($t_{cal.} = 10.25, p \text{ Value} = < 0.05$). Also, Male respondents reported higher level of Domestic Violence ($15.76, P < 0.05$). Similarly, participants with high Economic Status reported higher level of Domestic Violence ($t_{cal.} = 15.6, p < 0.05$) furthermore, participants with higher level of educational attainment also reported higher level of Domestic Violence. Significant differences were also found in the level of Domestic Violence experiences among participants based on Religion ($p < 0.05$). Based on the findings, it was recommended that Policy makers and other relevant agencies of Government develop a Demographic - sensitive interventions to address Domestic Violence among Kwara State Married Civil Servants.

Keywords: Demographic factors, Domestic Violence, Married Civil Servants

Introduction

Domestic violence (DV) is a global phenomenon that cut across the world irrespective of culture, religion and geographical location. The harmful consequence of DV behaviour has made it a call for concern across the globe. Globally, 30% of women population has experienced one form of domestic violence or the other, while 38% of cases of murder involving women have been committed by intimate partners of the women (World Health Organization, (W. H. O.), 2024).

In Nigeria, the concept of DV is not new although there has been a significant surge in the rate of the phenomena. Report obtained from the National Bureau of Statistics (N. B. S., 2019) stated that, 30% of Nigerian women between 15 - 45 years suffered physical abuse with a huge 68% suffering emotional, economic and sexual abuses. In Kwara State, the escalation of DV is worrisome and calls for concerns of all citizens especially the government and the counselling profession. According to a study by Odebode (2022), there are a high perceived prevalence of domestic violence against men in Kwara State, with a high significant proportion of respondents reporting various forms of violence behaviour against men, ranging from verbal threats, sex starving, starving husbands of food and malicious name calling behaviour. Abdulazeez and Olokooba (2022) posited that there has been prevalence of DV among couple in the Kwara State central senatorial zone with a significant surge in violent behaviour such as pouring of acid, hot water on one another, cutting of manhood by wives, stabbing of one another and poisoning of one another through food which has in most cases resulted in severe bodily and mental harm, and death. In Ilorin, cases of DV has continued to be on the rise despite concerted effort by the government through the recent creation of the *Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) law, (2020)*, arrest and prosecution of offenders, Civil societies campaigns and orientation against DV, professional counselors and other relevant stakeholders all contributing towards the reduction of the menace (Adeboye et al., 2021).

The act of intimate partner violence among civil servants is fast becoming a trend among married government employees in Nigeria and significant efforts must be invested to eradicate or reduce it to the barest minimum. For instance, it was agreed in Abolakale (2019) and Kofoworade et al (2022) that a highly significant numbers of adults especially the married women are facing varying degrees and types of DV in Ilorin Metropolis and the state at large and this is not unconnected to the civil servants since the civil servants are part of the population of kwara state. There is a nexus between emotional stress, job performance and organizational commitment among employees (Ibrahim & Lasisi, 2023). Domestic violence in the home could be a major source of emotional stress among employees which may affect their overall job commitment and performance.

The Civil Servants in the context of this study refers to all employees of Kwara State Government who are recruited, serving, and are on payroll of Kwara State Government and deployed to serve in any of the state government's MDAs or in any other capacity other than

the Federal and Local Governments employees in Kwara State. According to data obtained as published by the punch newspaper (2024, July 01), the total number of Kwara State Government's Civil Servants stands at Thirty-six Thousand, and Fourty-eight (36,048) and they are spread across MDAs in the state. This cited figure does not include Civil Servants on the pay roll of the Local Government Service Commission in Kwara State and the Federal Civil Service Commission resident within Ilorin. It was also confirmed that about 29, 000 representing about 81% of the workforce are married with a vast majority of them residing and working within Ilorin (Kwara State Office of the Head of Service, 2024).

The population of Kwara State is estimated to be at three million, five hundred and fifty-one thousand, one hundred and seventy-three (3,551,173) with thirty three percent (33%) approximated to be one million, one hundred and seventy-three thousand, nine hundred (1,173,900) residing within the Ilorin town. Furthermore, it was revealed that 50.5% of the population totalling about 1,794, 300 are male while 49.5% representing 1,758,900 are Females. Also, 53.3% of the entire population encompasses people of age bracket of 15-64 years which represent both the civil service and marriage age (National Population Commission of Nigeria, ((N. P. C. N.), 2022) and (N. B. S., 2022). From the above information, the choice of Ilorin in the study of DV among Kwara State's Civil Servants becomes very significant since majority of the study population are working and resident in Ilorin, Nigeria. The demographic factors identified in this study are Age, Gender, Religion, Economic-status and Level of Educational Attainment of partners.

The age of married partners is a factor to be considered in dealing with DV. The younger partners especially women between the age of 18-24 may experience higher level of DV than other age bracket due to inexperience in marital issues, teenagers and young adults could also experience "dating violence" which may be a pointer to imminent domestic violence (Neves, 2020). Also, a significant age gap between spouses could result in power imbalance wherefore the older partner potentially holds more control and authority. Guibetekin and Yildirim (2024) established a commonality between the age of partners and domestic violence in Turkey. The difference in age could affect the goals and priorities of the individual partners leading to conflict of interest which can escalate into DV. The inability of individuals to manage stressful experiences through the deployment of adequate coping mechanisms can result in adverse decisions such as indulgence in drug misuse as a coping mechanism leading to irrational behaviours including battering and other forms of DV (Lasisi & Ibrahim, 2023).

Gender plays a very paramount role in DV with women the most commonly affected. The severity of the consequence of DV varies among victims ranging from minor injuries, severe injuries, emotional damage and death in chronic cases (Aina-pelemo et al., 2020). Gender roles, societal expectations, stereotypes, stigma, access to resources and control, cultural and societal norms are the major triggers of domestic violence especially in African continent (Akanle & Busari, 2018).

Religion is a significant factor that aids the perpetration and escalating of domestic violence as some religious practices can be used to justify violence especially against women. Also, community norms and societal expectations embedded in religious beliefs can influence men's attitude and behaviour towards DV (Modupe & Bolarinwa, 2018). There is no doubt that Ilorin is characterized with religiosity and the influence of religious teaching on the prevalence of DV cannot be overlooked especially among the Islam and Christian religion practitioners who formed the dominant religions practiced within Ilorin.

Economic status is a key factor that can predict the presence of domestic violence perpetration among partners. According to Ibidunni, et al (2016), women Socio-economic status can influence domestic violence. Also, Poverty and poor economic status can distort normal reasoning and degenerate into frustration and emotional imbalance leading to aggressive behaviour and or transfer of aggression on the part of one or both partners. The rank of the civil servant is the determinant of economic status in this study, since the rank has a significant relationship with the monthly salaries and other emoluments enjoyed by civil servants (Ibidunni, et al., 2016).

The educational background and level of education attainment of the partners in a marital relationship is very important and a determinant factor to the stability or otherwise of that relationship. Lower educational attainment is associated with higher risk of domestic violence, victimization and perpetration (Eloh & Bolarinwa, 2020). This implies that, expectedly, men with lower level of educational attainment are more likely to exhibit DV against their wives. The attainment of higher education is usually connected with better conflict resolution mechanisms, better communication strategies and efficient problem solving skills which can be employed in the management of predisposing factors leading to DV in a marital relation.

Despite efforts by various to address the challenges of DV in Nigeria, and particularly in kwara state, it has remained a persistent and a complex issue of concern especially among married men and women including the civil servants within Ilorin. The existing literatures suggest a significant influence of demographic factors such as Age, Gender, Religion, Economic Status and Level of Educational Attainment on DV. However, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding how these demographic factors interact and influence DV in the specific context of Kwara State's married civil servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. Therefore, this study intends to bridge that knowledge gap by investigating the influence of the demographic factors on DV among Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of demographic factors on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. Other specific purposes include investigating;

1. The influence of Age on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria.
2. The influence of Gender on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servant in Ilorin,

Nigeria.

3. The influence of Religion on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria.
4. The influence of Economic Status on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria.
5. The influence of level of Educational attainment on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Five research hypotheses were tested at a 95% level of confidence in this study.

1. There is no significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on age.
2. There is no significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on gender.
3. There is no significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on religion.
4. There is no significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on economic status.
5. There is no significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on educational attainment.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research designs of ex post-facts type. The population of the study includes all Kwara State's married civil servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. The actual population of Kwara state civil servants living within Ilorin could not be verified from the relevant office (office of Head of Service, Kwara State and Kwara State Bureau of Statistics). The population of workforce of Kwara State Government is thirty-six thousand and forty eight (36,048) with large portion of this number resident within Ilorin. Since the vast majority of the Civil Servants reside within the Ilorin, the study adopted the population of Kwara State Civil Servants as the study population whereas three hundred and eighty four (384) participants were selected as population sample using Slovin formula of population size determination at 95% confidence level. The geographical scope of this study is Ilorin, Nigeria. Simple Randomization technique was adopted to select Twenty Staff consisting of ten male and ten female across twenty MDAs of Kwara state within Ilorin to give equality in term of gender and geographical spread of the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select twenty MDAs within Ilorin for this study. The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS- 2) was used to elicit relevant information from the respondents. The CTS-2, developed by Straus et al. (1996) is a standardized instrument with thirty nine items which is validly useful in the collection of relevant data for this study. The instrument has been validated by the developer and it has a reliability of Cronbach alpha of 0.95. The instrument has been used globally especially in India

and across Asia continent. The Analysis of Variance, t- test and Chi- square were used to analyze the collected data and provided answers to the tested hypotheses at 95% level of confidence.

Results

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the experiences of domestic violence among Kwara State’s Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on age.

Table 1: t. test Table Showing the Result of Differences in the Experiences of Domestic Violence among Married Civil Servant in Ilorin Based on Age

Variable	Number	Mean	St. Dev.	df	t. Cal.	Sig	p
Young	228	74.4	26.77	382	10.25	0.00	**
Old	156	105.56	31.16				

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 1 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis one. From the table, it is shown that t. calculated is 10.25, df is 382 and significance level is 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the experience of domestic violence among Civil Servants in Ilorin based on age.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the experiences of domestic violence among Married Civil Servants in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria based on gender.

Table 2: t. Test Table Showing the Result of Differences in the Experiences of Domestic Violence among Married Civil Servant in Ilorin, Nigeria Based on Gender

Variable	Number	Mean	St. Dev.	df	t. Cal.	Sig	p
Female	196	66.72	19.24	382	15.87	0.00	**
Male	188	108.27	30.95				

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 2 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis two. From the table, it is shown that t. calculated is 15.87, df is 382 and significance level is 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the experience of domestic violence among Civil Servants in Ilorin based on gender.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the experiences of domestic violence among Married Civil Servants in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria based on religion.

Table 3: One-way Analysis of Variance Showing the Experience of Domestic Violence among Married Civil Servant in Ilorin, Nigeria based Religion

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F. ratio	Sig
Between Gr.	224448.99	2	112224.50	222.16	0.00
Within Group	192460.63	381	505.15		
Total	416909.62	383			

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 3 shows the results obtained from testing hypothesis three. From the table, it is indicated that F. ratio is 222.16 and significant level is 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there was a significant difference in the experience of domestic violence among married civil servants in Ilorin, Kwara State based on religion

H0₄: There is no significant difference in the experiences of domestic violence among Married Civil Servants in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria based on economic status.

Table 4: t. Test Table Showing the Result of Differences in the Experiences of Domestic Violence among Married Civil Servant in Ilorin Based on Economic Status

Variable	Number	Mean	St. Dev.	df	t. Cal.	Sig	P
Low Eco Status	151	61.36	18.41	382	15.76	0.00	**
High Eco Status	233	103.71	29.5				

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 4 shows the result obtained from testing hypothesis four. From the table, it is shown that t. calculated is 15.76, df is 382 and significance level is 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the experience of domestic violence among Civil Servants in Ilorin based on economic status.

H0₅: There is no significant difference in the experiences of domestic violence among Married Civil Servants in Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria based on educational qualifications.

Table 5: One-way Analysis of Variance Showing the Experience of Domestic Violence among Married Civil Servant in Ilorin, Kwara State based Educational Qualifications

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F. ratio	Sig
Between Gr.	187854.37	4	46961.34	77.7	0.00
Within Group	229064.26	379	604.39		
Total	416909.62	383			

** (Significant at 0.05 critical region)

Table 5 shows the results obtained from testing hypothesis five. From the table, it is indicated that F. ratio is 77.7, and significant level is 0.00. Since the significant level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there was a significant difference in the experience of domestic violence among married civil servants in Ilorin, Kwara State based on educational qualifications

Table 6: Post Hoc (Ducan) tables (Religion) subset for alpha = 0.05

S/n	Variables	N	Mean	Sig	Remarks
1	Christianity	122	54.46	1.000	high
2	Islam	214	96.81	1.000	higher
3	Others	48	126.44	1.000	highest

Table 7: Post Hoc (Ducan) table (Level of Education) subset for alpha = 0.05

S/n	Variables	N	Means	Sig	Remarks
1	O Level	71	50.35	1.000	Lowest
2	OND/NCE	69	69.35	1.000	
3	HND	77	93.16	1.000	
4	First Degree	118	106.66		
5	Second Degree & Above	49	108.49	.672	Highest

Discussion of Results

The study investigated the influence of Demographic Factors on DV among Kwara State’s Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. It was revealed from the results of the hypotheses tested that there was a significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State’s Civil servants based on age (t. cal. = 10.25, df = 382, sig = 0.00), this result finds support by previous study of Makanjuola, et al. (2023) which revealed that there more prevalent of DV among older couples in Nigeria. This could be attributed to accumulations of long term stress

and pressures, power dynamics and social isolation which may characterize older marital relationships. Also, there was a significant difference in the experiences of DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants based on gender ($t. cal. = 15.87, df = 382, sig = 0.00$), from the findings, it was shown that men reported more DV experiences compared to the women. This finding was contrary to previous findings of Oseni, et al. (2022) who posited that there were more cases of DV against women in Edo State, Nigeria. This contradiction could result from men's unwillingness to publicly admit being victims of DV especially considering the fact that interview method was adopted for data collection in the study quoted above. Furthermore, results obtained from testing hypothesis three that there was a significant influence of demographic factors on DV among Kwara State's married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria based on religion (F. ratio is 222.16 and significant level is 0.00). From the post hoc (Duncan) table, it is shown that Christian married Kwara State's Civil Servants experienced lesser DV ($n = 122, mean = 54.46$), the Muslim Kwara State's Married Civil Servant experienced higher DV ($n = 214, mean = 96.81$) and the other Religion recording the highest experiences of DV ($n = 48, mean = 126.44$). This finding is in agreement with previous study of Afolabi (2022) which revealed that there is significant influence of religion on DV among couples in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Also, the results obtained from testing hypothesis four revealed that there is a significant influence of Economic Status on DV among Kwara State's Married Civil Servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. Married Civil servants with low economic Status reported lower experiences of DV compared to couples with high economic status ($15.76, df = 382$ and significance level is 0.00). This finding was in contrast with previous study of Umukoro and Okurame (2023) which revealed that there economic status has no influence on DV among wives in Nigerian military homes. The reason for the above submission could be attributed to the fact the Nigerian military has zero tolerance for DV especially against women and wives of her personnel. Lastly, results obtained from testing hypothesis five showed that level of educational attainment influenced DV among Kwara State's married Civil servants in Ilorin, Nigeria. Specifically, married employees with "O" reported the least experiences of DV while married employees with highest educational qualification (ph. D) reported the highest DV experiences. This finding is contrary to previous study of Oluwagbemiga, et al. (2023) which posited that there were higher DV experiences among couple with low educational qualification and lower DV experiences among couple with higher DV experiences. While it is expected that couple with higher educational qualification would possess basic and better conflict resolution mechanism which could be easily deployed in solving domestic conflict, ego problem and other academically influenced biases could negatively affect it. On the other hand, couple with less exposure to western education may choose religious teachings and principles in running their homes where by the wives are totally submissive and are unwaveringly loyal to the husbands as "heads of the house" with unquestionable authority, this may not be easily obtainable among learned couples.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that demographic factors play a significant role in shaping DV experiences among Kwara State Civil Servants highlighting the need for targeted interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends that;

1. Policy makers and other relevant agencies of the government develop a Demographic - sensitive interventions to address DV among Kwara State Married Civil Servants.
2. Government should intensify awareness campaign programs through the engagement of professional counselors and other relevant stakeholders including reputable civil society organizations, religious and community leaders against DV in the state.
3. Government should create enabling environment for private counselling practice to assist in the management of victims of DV among kwara State Civil Servants.

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PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN'S PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

This study was carried out in Abia State, Nigeria to determine the impact of intimate partner violence (IPV) on the psychosocial development of children by professional counsellors. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 103 professional counsellors in Abia State. Sixty-three professional counsellors with more than five years of experience were purposively sampled. Two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses were formulated. Data were collected using a questionnaire developed by the researchers and validated by experts with reliability index of .84 obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at a two-week interval. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency which yielded a value of .79. The findings show that majority of the professional counsellors surveyed identified the items as perceived impact of IPV on the psychological development of children ranging from low self-esteem to suicidal ideation. Again, majority of the participants with 5 to 10 years of counselling experience did not perceive most of the items addressing the impact of IPV on the social development of children. However, participants with 11 years and above identified all the items as perceived impact of IPV on the social development of children. The hypotheses were rejected. It was concluded that professional counsellors had good knowledge of the impact of IPV on the psychosocial development of children though they differed by years of experience. Enriching the curriculum content of counsellor trainees with IPV contents is recommended among others. Counselling implications were highlighted.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, Professional Counsellors, impact, psychosocial development, children

Introduction

The overall development of the child is intricately connected with the family environment. Raising children in families marked by intra-familial violence constitutes a profoundly distressing experience impacting their overall development and life trajectory especially their psychosocial well-being. Such distressing environments have the adverse consequences of reducing the likelihood of optimizing their potential. This may increase the probability of becoming either victims or perpetrators of violent behaviour which may persist throughout their entire lifespan. Though intimate partner violence (IPV) is a global phenomenon, Nigeria in recent times has witnessed increased IPV due largely to abject poverty, inequality, ethno-religious conflicts, terrorism, banditry, bad governance among others (Ukorji & Ukorji, 2023). This has had increasing implications for intimate relationships among Nigerians thus exposing the children in those relationships to its negative impacts. Adejimi et al. (2022) reiterated that IPV is one of the most pervasive human rights violation which has negative impacts on the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities and of great public health importance in Nigeria (Mukaddas, 2024).

As captured by Sucipto et al. (2024), the family is the smallest social unit in society that has a significant impact on the personality development of each family member and the way they interact with other people. The early years of a child's life are a period of rapid brain and behaviour development. During this time, children are extremely vulnerable to the negative impacts of IPV occurring within their environment. It can have harmful effects on the development of important brain structures, such as the limbic system, and the development of attachment bonds (Mueller & Tronick, 2020; Cameranesi & Piotrowski, 2020); and increase sensitivity to future stress (Martinez-Torteya et al. 2016) his process can have lasting impacts on children's arousal and emotional reactivity in response to perceived stressors and can lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress, internalizing and externalizing disorders, and difficulties with key developmental tasks such as emotion regulation, social competence, and prosocial skills (Boeckel et al., 2015). These negative impacts of IPV in childhood do not necessarily manifest at the time of exposure but can develop over time (Holmes et al., 2015).

Intimate Partner Violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal violence and dating violence. It refers to any kind of sexual, physical, emotional or psychological violence or abusive behaviour which occurs in an intimate partner relationship between adults or adolescents. According to Tanimu et al. (2016), intimate partners include spouses; current or past, marital, or non-marital, boyfriends/girlfriends; current or past, whether they are living together or not. Intimate Partner violence can be described as violent behaviour towards another spouse including but not limited to controlling, bullying, violent arguing, or threatening behaviour (Chatwick-Charuma et al., 2022), (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member (Swanston et al, 2014; Kourti et al. 2023).

A harmonious family setting promotes feelings of safety and stability, facilitating a child's optimal physical and emotional growth. Conversely, a tense or violent home environment can impede a child's development. Harmony is the mutual ties between each family member and each individual reflects this positive relationship (Yunita et al, 2022). A family is said to be harmonious if all its members protect and love each other. On the other hand, a family is considered disharmonious if the opposite happens (Lila, et al, 2022).

Intimate partner violence is one of the most negative experiences that affect the development of children and youth with long-lasting implications (Bo & Yating, 2023). Hall (2019) considers children as indirect victims of IPV and may suffer severe and irreversible physical and mental impacts. Banerjee et al. (2019), Forke et al. (2019), Maji (2018), Mittal (2020) reported that the psychological complications include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), lower self-esteem, increased risk of substance abuse, self-injury, and even suicide. Doroudchi et al. (2023) added that such complications may be short and long-lasting, and moderate or severe.

IPV has been found to contribute to decline in social activity of children who are victims or witnesses of IPV (Howarth et al., 2019). Children exposed to IPV also exhibit poorer emotional regulation which may affect peer relationships and general social functioning (Bender et al., 2022).

A recent systematic review ($n=26$ studies), Bender et al. (2022) explored the effects of IPV exposure on social-emotional competence and found the majority (66.7%) of children exposed to IPV displayed poorer social competence outcomes compared with non-exposed peers. In another recent systematic review ($n=13$ studies) investigating childhood IPV exposure and bullying, 75% of the studies found IPV exposure to be associated with bullying perpetration, and 80% found it to be associated with bullying victimization (Lee et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence shows that IPV seriously harms children's growth, and its cumulative effects may last until adulthood (Haque et al., 2021). Those children exposed to IPV had much worse psychosocial outcomes than those who were not exposed to IPV at all (Chernikova et al., 2020). According to Sanders-McDonagh et al. (2016), the impact of IPV on children who witness it can be devastating and increase their risk of becoming victims of violence themselves. Others feel socially isolated and cannot easily make friends (Piquero et al., 2021).

The high prevalence rate of IPV and by implication the greater number of children exposed to IPV make it imperative that it should be a research priority. Intimate partner violence affects approximately 496 million children worldwide (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2021). Compared to the global average (30%), the prevalence of IPV is lower in High income countries (23.2%) and higher in low/middle income countries (LMICs) (36.6%—37.7%) (WHO, 2021). Benebo et al. (2018) put the global prevalence of IPV as 30%, while that of Nigeria ranges between 33 – 68%. However, a more recent study put estimated prevalence of IPV in Nigeria as 39.4% (Awolaram et al., 2021). Okedare and Fawole (2023) provided

prevalence rates by type- physical (31.4%, 13.4%), sexual (37.1%, 18.3%), and psychological IPV (58.6%, 31.5%) among slum than non-slum communities.

Most children and youth who are exposed to violence are never formally identified, assessed, and/or treated (Naughton et al., 2015). The emotional, social, and psychological impact of their exposure is observed by families and practitioners in many settings.

Given the deleterious consequences of intimate partner violence on children’s development, and considering the high prevalence of IPV, literature on professional counsellors’ perception of its psychosocial impact on children’s development is limited and lacks extensive review, making this study imperative. Such information is critical in order to identify gaps in knowledge and inform policy and practice.

Statement of the Problem

Intimate partner violence occurs in homes in the full view of children. Empirical evidence on the deleterious impact of IPV on children abound. Professional counsellors directly deal with IPV by providing services. How much the counsellors are aware of the impact of IPV on the psychosocial development of the children in such families is yet to be determined. Aye et al. (2022) study surveyed the physical and psychological health consequences of intimate partner violence among married primary school teachers in Delta South Senatorial Zone of Delta State, Nigeria. They, however did not consider the consequences of IPV on the children who experience such violence. Jofre-Bonet et al. (2024) explored IPV and children’s health outcome but did not consider the psychosocial impact. This study investigated the professional counsellors’ knowledge of the impact of IPV on the psychological and social development of children in Abia State, Nigeria. This may contribute to reducing the ripple effects of intimate partner violence and the harm on these children and foster their optimal development. To the best of the researchers’ knowledge, this study is the first to survey professional counsellors’ knowledge of the impact of IPV on children’s psychosocial development in the study area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study specifically stated are:

- ◆ to explore the level of knowledge of professional counsellors on the perceived impact of IPV on the psychological development of children who experience IPV.
- ◆ to determine the level of professional counsellors’ knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children’s social development.

Research Questions

- ◆ What is the level of professional counsellors’ knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children’s psychological development?
- ◆ What is the professional counsellors’ knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children’s social development?

Null Hypotheses

There is no significant mean score difference in the level of professional counsellors' knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children's psychological development by years of experience.

There is no significant mean score difference in the level of professional counsellors' knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children's social development by years of experience.

Methods

This study adopted the descriptive research design and was carried out in Abia State, Nigeria. The population comprised 103 professional counsellors in Abia State. A total of 63 professional counsellors with more than five years of experience were purposively sampled, 35 had 5 – 10 years' experience while 28 had more than 11 years' experience. Their mean age was 54.5. Data were collected using the "Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Children's Psychosocial Development questionnaire" (IIPVCPDQ) - a 20-item questionnaire which was validated by three experts, two in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability index of .84 was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at a two-week interval. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency which yielded a value of .79. The four point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) was adopted. The decision benchmark is 2.50. The decision rule is that if $p \leq 0.05$ the null hypothesis is rejected, otherwise not rejected. The data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 20.0 to answer two research questions and test the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question1

What is the level of professional counsellors' knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children's psychological development?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of perceived impact of IPV on psychological development of children

		5-10 Yrs. Experience (N0: 35)			11 + Yrs. Experience (No:28)		
S/N	Item Statement	x	Std.	Decision	x	Std.	Decision
1	Low self-esteem	2.90	0.35	Accept	3.30	0.28	Accept
2	Anxiety	2.84	0.31	Accept	3.37	0.32	Accept
3	Depression	2.91	0.36	Accept	3.27	0.32	Accept
4	Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)	2.93	0.36	Accept	3.37	0.21	Accept
5	Feelings of shame and guilt	2.95	0.33	Accept	3.36	0.20	Accept
6	Nervousness	3.06	0.35	Accept	3.30	0.22	Accept
7	Feelings of hopelessness	3.04	0.34	Accept	3.23	0.22	Accept
8	Antisocial behaviour	3.10	0.35	Accept	3.33	0.19	Accept
9	Increased risk of substance misuse	3.06	0.32	Accept	3.28	0.17	Accept
10	Self-injury	3.10	0.34	Accept	3.34	0.25	Accept
11	Suicidal ideation	3.13	0.36	Accept	3.00	0.21	Accept
	Pulled mean	3.00	0.09	Accept	3.28	0.10	Accept

The findings of the study as seen in Table 1 show that the professional counsellors surveyed identified majority of the items in the table 1 as perceived impact of IPV on the psychological development of children ranging from low self-esteem to suicidal ideation. However, it was observed that the mean scores of those with more years of experience were higher in majority of the items in the table.

Research Question 2

What is the professional counsellors’ knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children’s social development?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of perceived impact of IPV on social development of

Children.							
		5-10 Yrs. Experience			11 + Yrs. Experience		
S/N	Item Statement	x	Std.	Decision	x	Std.	Decision
12	Decline in social activity	1.84	0.33	Do not accept	3.08	0.39	Accept
13	Avoidance of relationship with other people	2.55	0.33	Accept	3.11	0.37	Accept
14	Aggression towards others	2.71	0.35	Accept	3.22	0.36	Accept
15	Separation anxiety	2.34	0.32	Do not accept	3.16	0.37	Accept
16	Less attachment to care givers	2.30	0.33	Do not accept	3.20	0.34	Accept
17	Social isolation	2.40	0.32	Do not accept	3.27	0.33	Accept
18	Lack of social skills	2.20	0.34	Do not accept	3.25	0.29	Accept
19	Difficulty forming healthy relationships	2.53	0.34	Accept	3.28	0.28	Accept
20	Gang involvement	2.76	0.35	Accept	3.30	0.25	Accept
Pulled mean		2.40	0.28	Do not accept	3.21	0.08	Accept

The findings of the study in respect of the second research question show that the majority of the participants with 5 to 10 years of counselling experience did not perceive most of the items addressing the impact of IPV on the social development of children except for item 13 – avoidance of relationship with other people, 14- aggression towards others; 19 – difficulty forming healthy relationships; and 20 – gang involvement. The pulled mean score for those with 5 – 10 years’ experience was 2.40 with standard deviation of .28 which was below the acceptable cut –off mean score. However, participants with 11 years and above counselling experience identified all the items in table 2 as perceived impact of IPV on the social development of children.

Null Hypotheses1 and 2

There is no significant mean score difference in the level of professional counsellors’ knowledge on perceived impact of IPV on children’s psychosocia development by years of experience.

Table 3: Mean, standard deviation and t values of perceived impact of IPV on psychosocial development of children

Measures	5 – 10Yrs. Exp. (N=35)		11 Yrs. + Exp. (N=28)		df.	t. cal.	t values	Decision
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Impact of IPV on psychological development	3.00	0.09	3.28	0.10	61	1.96	11.67	Significant (Reject)
Impact of IPV on Social development	2.40	0.28	3.21	0.08			14.81	Significant (Reject)

The findings in Table 3 show that the t values in respect of the hypotheses were higher than the table value leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses. This implies that professional counsellors with more years of experience are more knowledgeable about the impact of IPV on the psychosocial development of children.

Discussion of Findings

The present study investigated the knowledge of professional counsellors on the perceived impact of IPV on the psychosocial development of children. It is believed that this knowledge will spur them to consider the needs of the children exposed to IPV and provide services to them promptly. The results of the study concurred with that of Forke et al. (2019), Mittal (2020) and Doroudchi et al. (2023) who identified depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), lower self-esteem, increased risk of substance abuse, self-injury, and even suicide as possible impact of IPV on the children. This study also corroborates the earlier findings of Bender at al. (2022) and Lee et al. (2022) on the perceived impact of IPV on the children’s social development. Both studies identified lack of social competence, difficulty making friends, bullying, and others as possible social impacts of IPV on children. These findings supporting earlier findings are significant indications that the professional counsellors may have acquired knowledge of the impact of IPV on the psychosocial development of children from literature or from experience.

The current study revealed that perceptions seemed to differ by years of experience with those higher in years of experience showing greater knowledge of the impact IPV on the psychosocial development of children. With increasing experience, counsellors increase their horizon and become more reflective and critical in their service delivery. This might account for the variation. It can as well account for the rejection of the null hypotheses postulating no significant mean score difference in the level of knowledge of impact of IPV on the

psychological development of children by years of experience.

Implications for Counselling Practice

Professional counsellors need to take cognizance of the impact of IPV on children when assessing risks of IPV. The central message in exploring the impacts of IPV is that no matter how it is experienced, IPV is harmful to both adults and children. It is important for all counsellors to be competent in identifying impacts of IPV as well as addressing them. Children presenting with symptoms of low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and/or trauma should be screened for exposure to IPV. Professional counsellors should be mindful of warning signs such as frequent conflicts, aggression, bullying, presence of fear, anxiety, depression and the like.

Counsellor educators have pivotal roles to play in all these. Exposing their students to the overall impacts of IPV may prepare them adequately to appreciate the impact of IPV especially on children and proactively work towards prevention and remediation. There is need to equip counsellors adequately to screen for risk for IPV and be able to work therapeutically with those who have experienced, witnessed, and/or perpetrated IPV.

Prevention and early intervention efforts focused on social functioning may be important to reduce intergenerational patterns of violence. Educating families about the impact of IPV on children's psychological and social development is imperative and falls under the purview of professional counsellors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study revealed that most of the professional counsellors surveyed identified the items listed as impact of IPV on the psychological development of children while there were slight variations on the impact of IPV on the social development of children. Intimate partner violence are potential risk factors for the psychosocial development of children. Enriching the curriculum content of counsellor trainees with IPV contents is recommended as well as organizing workshops and seminars for serving counsellors on IPV and its impacts.

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